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DECEMBER 17, 1990 • $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Cold war spy stuff, by Eric Breindel • Quota wars, by Fred Barnes • Mark Strand's poetry

GAY LIFE, GAY DEATH

by Andrew Sullivan

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If Zionism is racism, then slavery is freedom, peace is war, and truth is a lie.

For 15 years, one third of its life, the United Nations has lived with a resolution that defamed the Jewish people by equating its liberation movement, Zionism,with racism and racial discrimination.

The time has come for the U.N. to cleanse itself of this libel, to remove this vestige of its period of extremism and confrontation and to honor its charter.

THE HARMFUL EFFECTS of this Resolution 3379, adopted on November 10, 1975, are hard to exaggerate:

• In the Middle East it retarded the growth of realism and compromise in the Palestinian Arab camp, while encouraging a siege mentality in Israel.

• In the human rights field it confused the issue of racism and thus set back the struggle against real forms of racial bigotry as well as encouraging a tolerance for anti-Semitism.

• It supplied a justification for international terrorism as a form of legitimate struggle.

• And not the least, it swelled the ranks of people who dismiss the U.N. as an "Alice in Wonderland" world filled with mad hatters who might next declare slavery to be freedom.

Today the new political thinking at the U.N. seeks cooperation over confrontation, reconciliation over mistrust.

And so, in the 45th session of the U.N. General Assembly, with the decade of the 1990s promising a world of truly united nations, we earnestly petition the U.N. member-states to repeal Resolution 3379.

BESIDES UNDOING a grave injustice, it will also serve as a signal of peace to those who must ultimately live together in the troubled Middle East.

Repeal the resolution. Restore the integrity of the U.N.

Kent E. Schiner
International President, B'nai B'rith

Peter B. Kovler, Chairman
The Campaign to Rescind the Zionism - Racism Resolution

Thomas Neumann
Executive Vice President, B'nai B'rith

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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DECEMBER 17, 1990

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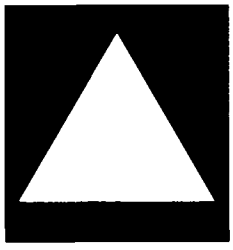

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Read my lips again

George Bush says he's learned his lesson. No more new taxes, and this time he really means it. In fact, he "seriously regrets . . . being forced" by big-spending Democrats to raise taxes the last time. Of course "no new taxes" was always, as *The Wall Street Journal* put it, "the Big Lie of the great budget debate." Bush's choices were a fiscal calamity, a tax increase, or spending cuts too unpopular to propose. Through months of demagoguery, he never did propose spending cuts anywhere near equal to the tax increase he supposedly wanted to avoid.

But what about No New Taxes II? Can he, without uncharacteristic fortitude, hold to this one?

The mildly irritating answer: probably yes. The recent five-year budget agreement calls for no further cuts in entitlements (Medicare, Social Security, and so on). It allows other domestic spending to increase at the rate of inflation. It projects cuts in defense along the lines recommended by Senator Sam Nunn. (And who has more exquisitely modulated views on such matters?) At the end of that time (according to Robert Reischauer, director of the Congressional Budget Office), under reasonable assumptions about the economy, the deficit will be down to less than $100 billion and 1 percent of GNP—the lowest in twenty years.

In short, the budget crisis may actually be over. The peace dividend and the deal Bush now sneers at will have bailed him out. Of course many wise people think we should be running a government *surplus*, to feed our anemic savings pool. But that's merely a matter of pissing away our prosperity in the long term. Hardly urgent. The immediate need to act *or else* may be gone.

This assumes no big surprises like a deeper-than-expected recession, or a collapse of the banking system, or a war that foreigners don't care to pay for. It assumes the continued and growing misuse of Social Security payroll taxes to finance the rest of the government: $120 billion worth in 1995, more than the deficit itself. It similarly assumes that money will accumulate in the highway and air traffic trust funds, but we won't use it to fix our crumbling roads or relieve our crowded airports. Above all, it assumes that no one will wish the government to do anything new. It is a recipe for stasis: five years of holding our breaths.

This puts in an interesting light the debate going on in the White House about Bush's long-sought "domestic agenda" (a.k.a. "vision"). The issue: Should he use January's State of the Union address to adopt a series of proposals tarred by their own advocates with the label "the New Paradigm"? These include such things as tax breaks for capital gains (natch), tax breaks for "enterprise zones," tax breaks for the working poor, tax breaks for poetry that rhymes, tax breaks for a good bowl of chili, and so on. Since the one area of social policy already dominated by tax breaks—public housing—is a disaster (hmmm . . .), for housing the Paradigmers urge fixing up apartments and selling them cheap to their tenants.

God knows George Bush is not alone in needing new ideas on social policy. Some of the "New Paradigm" ideas are interesting. And some of them might not cost much extra money. Public school "choice"—everyone's favorite—for example. But most of them would cost a lot of money. (A guaranteed job and day care for every welfare recipient? Think $30 billion, says TNR's Mickey Kaus.) Under the budget deal, there is no money.

There is nothing inherently conservative about these massive and costly new government programs. I would call them neoliberalish. The self-described "conservative ideologues"—led by Housing Secretary Jack Kemp—who are pushing them surely lose all right to the ideological label if they won't point to other government spending they are willing to eliminate, dollar-for-dollar.

Budget director Richard Darman, Kemp's rival in this drama of office politics, is playing against type as a man of integrity. In a November 16 speech Darmanesque to the point of self-parody—with references to "Hubble-ism," "cultural now-now-ism," "no-no-ism," "yes-yes-ism," "neo-pop-media-ism," etc.—it may have taken gall for Darman to mock the humble term "New Paradigm." But he did. And in the Q&A he went further. He attacked government benefits for "the politically well represented and numerous middle class," and said some of this money should be redirected toward the poor. For honesty, courage, and radicalism, that puts Kemp's babble to shame.

Our budget dilemma is not ideological. You could lock two genuine ideologues of the left and right in a room, and

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Here's a glimmer of hope in the war against crime.

In cities ranging from Los Angeles to Baltimore to Newport News, innovative police chiefs are adopting bold new strategies resulting not only in better crime control but also a better quality of life for the community. Here's a report from the front and a blueprint for action.

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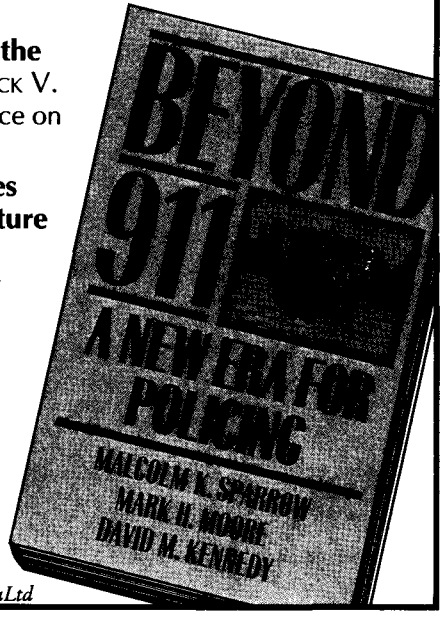

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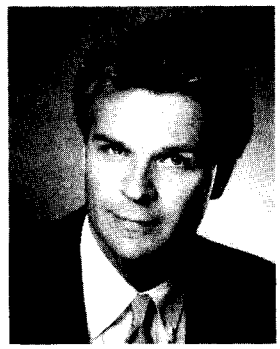

A message from
Jeffrey L. Dearth,
President

What could be more in keeping with the spirit of the season than sharing with friends and family—anyone whose conversation and company you enjoy—the uncommon experience of *The New Republic*? It's truly the *thoughtful* gift for the holidays.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Young and libertine

To the editors:

As a college friend of now-Representative Dana Rohrabacher, and as an unreconstructed libertarian, I found Karen Lehrman's "The Dope on Dana" (November 5) tasty fare but also a Swiss cheese of omission and oversimplification. For example, far more than a right-winger who practiced Better Living Through Chemistry, Mr. Rohrabacher was also co-creator of the first "Right-Left Festivals of Mind Liberation" in Southern California. As emcee of these events, I found much enlightenment in sharing ideas that bridged the political spectrum with such participants as Nathaniel Branden, Tom Hayden, Carl Oglesby, and Paul Goodman.

In his opposition to taxpayer funding of artists by the NEA, Mr. Rohrabacher is a better libertarian, a defender of freedom, than are most liberals. Beneath the populist rhetoric, he is opposed to censorship of the arts by both right-wing neanderthals and left-wing ideologues, who dispense tax dollars to artists who conform politically.

I disagree with his recent position reportedly favoring a five-year war on drugs that, in effect, would declare martial law and erase many citizens rights. Others are welcome to rationalize his stand as that of a faithful representative of the views of his district's voters, even if he might personally prefer a different approach. Or perhaps, as Ms. Lehrman inadvertently implies, Dana has by osmosis begun to absorb the unsavory neoauthoritarian liberal impulses that rule Washington—the power lusts of those eager to force their values on others through government via police and taxation. As for his support for a proposal to jail today's drug users for what he himself used to enjoy, what successful politician is without hypocrisy?

LOWELL PONTE
Carlsbad, California

To the editors:

Karen Lehrman's attack on my good friend Dana Rohrabacher was amusing but overwrought. I've known Dana for nearly twenty-five years and became, in fact, the national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom in September 1969, shortly after Dana was allegedly "purged as YAF state chair for being obnoxiously libertarian over the draft and drug legalization."

Dana was a libertarian and did oppose the draft—but so did YAF and, ultimately, President Richard Nixon. Dana was extremely libertarian, but he wasn't obnoxious about it. I remember his views on Vietnam as being the same as mine: we both objected to the fact that the United States wasn't trying to win the war. Dana's opinions, by the way, were shaped by firsthand observation: in 1967 he spent several months in Vietnam to see for himself.

There is no question that Dana has matured and even moderated some of his youthful views. I don't know whether he agrees with Bill Buckley today that drugs should be legalized, but such views are held by other respected conservatives, and though I may disagree with them, they are not evidence of flakiness. Moreover, Dana's objections to NEA funding hardly represent a break with his libertarian past: Why, after all, should government be in the business of sending checks to any artist?

DAVID A. KEENE
Alexandria, Virginia

Karen Lehrman replies:

Mr. Rohrabacher was "obnoxiously libertarian over the draft" in that he and other libertarians loudly advocated draft resistance, which YAF opposed. As for Mr. Rohrabacher's views on Vietnam, in the mid-1960s they were as Mr. Keene remembers them. But according to Gene Berkman and others who knew Mr. Rohrabacher at the time, by 1969 he had moved to the more libertarian position that the United States had no business interfering in the affairs of another country, Communist or not.

Mr. Rohrabacher's NEA stance was "a break with his libertarian past" in the sense that he ended up supporting government-enforced "standards." As I noted, his original amendment, which he quickly discarded in his eagerness to be Jesse Helms's henchman, took the very libertarian position of abolishing the agency altogether.

Commune ground

To the editors:

Martin Peretz missed the mark in his November 5 Cambridge Diarist ("Word Games") by glossing over the natural desire people have to belong to a community. He wrote: "Still, people like to think of themselves as belonging to a community, because the very word connotes moral norms."

The bulk of his piece focuses on misuses and aberrant behavior surrounding the word "community." This confused approach to worldly affairs is not uncommon. In health care, medical training focuses single-mindedly on health aberrations and all but ignores the natural,

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MICHIGAN MICHIGAN MICHIGAN

Jagdish Bhagwati and Hugh T. Patrick, Editors

AGGRESSIVE UNILATERALISM

America's 301 Trade Policy and the World Trading System

"A timely antidote the the unilateralist venom poisoning U.S. trade policy." —Martin Wolf, *Financial Times*

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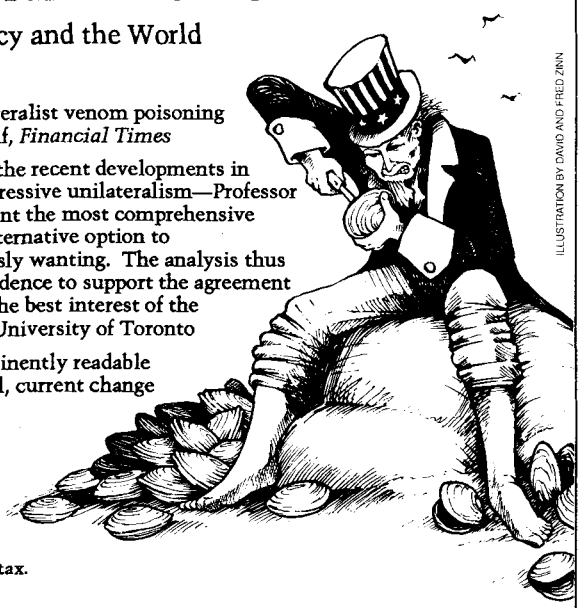

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 17, 1990

DYING FOR DOLLARS

Is the government spending too much money on AIDS? Five years ago, when researchers understood little about the disease, and when its potential spread seemed unbounded, the answer was an obvious no. The only people who asked the question, in fact, were those who deemed the primary victims of HIV, gay men and intravenous drug-users, unworthy of public help. In the years since, the terrain has shifted. Though there's still no cure, scientific understanding of the virus has gained considerably. Evidence from the screening of military applicants and blood donors suggests that the rate of new HIV infection has been decreasing for several years. Though the number of new cases of AIDS may or may not have peaked already, the disease no longer appears to be out of control. And since this trend emerged, it hasn't been just kooks wondering why AIDS deserves the biggest chunk of federal health funding.

In numerical terms, AIDS does get a disproportionate share of the government disease dollar. This year about 30,000 Americans will die of AIDS-related illnesses. By comparison, 800,000 will die of heart disease. Yet the Public Health Service will spend $1.3 billion on a cure for AIDS, and only $700 million on cardiac ailments. To some observers this kind of statistical evidence means, as our colleague Charles Krauthammer put it in *Time* a few weeks ago, that "AIDS has become the most privileged disease in America." In this view, a powerful, articulate gay lobby has seized more than its fair share of resources. Michael Fumento, the author of *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*, takes this argument a step further, asserting in the October issue of *Commentary*: "The blunt fact is, then, that a great many people will die of other diseases because of the overemphasis on AIDS."

It's certainly true that AIDS has not been treated like other diseases. But there's no way that it could or should have been. When AIDS struck in 1981, hundreds of thousands of young people were suddenly hit by an unforeseeable, incurable illness. Unlike congenital diseases, whose death rates are relatively stable, AIDS was caused by a transmittable new virus. No one knew then how far or how quickly it would spread. (This still describes the condition in Africa, where AIDS is spreading exponentially, devastating entire communities.) The apt comparison here is not to leukemia or Alzheimer's, but to a natural disaster like the San Francisco earthquake or Hurricane Hugo. The federal government spent more than $500 million on emergency relief after the quake (which killed sixty-two people) and $1.5 billion on Hugo (which killed twenty-eight). The response to these disasters was not to calculate a consistent amount of assistance per body—in the case of Hugo, $53 million per death. It was to do everything possible to alleviate the suffering of those struck by tragedy. The same instinct rightly governed the initial response to AIDS, though at times the Reagan administration's generosity of spirit left something to be desired.

Between 1982 and 1986 funding for AIDS research rose by more than 100 percent a year. There is no denying that pressure groups were in large measure responsible for this expansion. But to view such spending as pork barrel that benefited a single interest group at the expense of others or the common good is to accept a misconception about how scientific progress occurs. In the first place, biomedical research cannot be narrowly compartmentalized; spin-offs frequently develop in areas that seem superficially unrelated. (See "Stalking the Cold Trail" by Timothy Springer, TNR, October 29.) Spending on Richard Nixon's "War on Cancer" in the 1970s produced important advances in molecular biology. Many of these discoveries proved invaluable as a basis for AIDS research in the 1980s. This research has in turn been responsible for significant contributions to virology, immunology, and microbiology. Increased understanding of gene expression, the

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immune system, viral evolution, and disease susceptibility are byproducts of AIDS research that are of great value, whether or not research ultimately leads to an AIDS vaccine or cure.

The federal AIDS project has had other beneficial side effects. It has provided insights into other sexually transmitted diseases, which facilitate the spread of HIV infection. And pressure brought to bear by activists has been directly responsible for glasnost at the Food and Drug Administration, which has meant an acceleration in trials, testing, and access to drugs. The demands of AIDS victims have greatly increased the speed with which all patients—not just those clamoring for AZT—can gain access to experimental treatments.

A report issued earlier this year by the Office of Technology Assessment shows that scientists are split on the question of whether AIDS has diverted funds from other fields. But only 18 percent of those surveyed thought AIDS was receiving too much money. Seventy-six percent thought it was getting the right amount or too little. This suggests not that AIDS research is overfunded, but that it is one of the only areas of biomedical research that is adequately funded. It would be absurd to criticize the gay lobby for securing sufficient monies for its disease while others go begging. Instead, others should emulate the AIDS lobby's success. If breast and cervical cancer, which kill about 50,000 American women a year, receive a pathetic $50 million in research dollars, it is not because of anything ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) has done. It's because the women's movement has been too fixated on abortion to bother about other issues.

Advocates of AIDS research recognize that they cannot lay claim to a greater share of existing resources. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief of HIV research at the National Institutes of Health, says that the share of the NIH budget devoted to AIDS should not exceed its present level of 10 percent. AIDS activists by and large accept this and are now working to augment the size of the total pie. ACT-UP and other groups argue for increased funding for all aspects of biomedical research, especially so-called basic research. In other words, the AIDS lobby has been so effective it is now fighting battles for others. We hope they're as successful in the next campaign as they have been in the last.

THE LADY VANISHES

The ancient republics had a word for what happened to Margaret Thatcher last week: ostracism. A figure who'd grown too strong for her own democracy, whose radicalism finally pushed a tired nation into revolt, was dispatched to exile. The London suburb of Dulwich, where she and her long-suffering husband, Denis, will now retire, is not exactly a far-flung Greek isle, but the idea's the same.

And suddenly American liberals are almost fond of her. A figure once habitually derided is now merely dismissed. She is, on this reading, a woman whose legitimate achievements were undermined by authoritarianism, philistinism, xenophobia, and insufficient compassion for the victims of her policies.

This is too easy a judgment. In many ways her policies softened with time. Unlike other conservatives, Thatcher saw the genuineness of Mikhail Gorbachev's attempt to remake the Soviet Union as early as 1984. In her term of office, government spending on health and on social security rose by a third in real terms. On Europe, she signed the watershed Single Europe Act of 1986, which ceded much national sovereignty to the European Community, and was a motor behind the free-market reforms for 1992, which galvanized European unity. However reluctantly, she also brought the pound into the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System. On Ulster, Thatcher signed the 1987 Hillsborough Agreement, which allowed the Republic of Ireland an advisory role in the affairs of the north.

There are other achievements liberals needn't scorn. She cut the top rate of income tax from 83 percent to 40 percent (Labour now only wants to restore it to 50 percent), the basic rate from 33 percent to 25 percent, removed the burden of income tax from millions of low-paid workers altogether, and ran a budget surplus at the same time. She quadrupled the number of British shareholders, presided over a doubling of British productivity, and privatized two-thirds of state-owned companies. There was no British miracle. The late 1980s boom, combined with financial deregulation, unleashed a new inflation that looked alarmingly like the old ones. But few now deny there was a change for the better. Most striking of all, Britain's unemployment rate went from the worst of the European economies to the best. The 1980s growth rate was almost double West Germany's.

Thatcher bequeaths a welfare state American liberals fantasize about, and by making it more efficient—Democrats, please note—she made it more popular. Her empowerment of the British middle class against the snobbery of the elites and the thuggery of the old trade unions was a thoroughly liberal reform. She was also, odd though it is to recall it, a woman. In a ruthlessly sexist society, she not only made it to the top but flourished there. (She was, incidentally, pro-choice, and also reformed British tax laws to give women greater fiscal independence from their husbands.)

Her political courage was not her greatest virtue, although Americans have reason to be grateful for it in the deployment of Cruise missiles on British soil, the bombing of Tripoli, and the current crisis in the Persian Gulf. Toward the end she fetishized this trait and was unable to distinguish it from pig-headedness. Her real gift was political honesty—a pathological inability

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to engage in the blather with which American politics is plagued. This bluntness—and the diligent intelligence that supported it—distinguished her from Ronald Reagan, and the durability of her legacy from his.

She was also a real Burkean, not in the sense of a conservative who wishes to be liked at dinner parties, but in the sense of someone who knew that maintaining political institutions requires their occasional overhaul. There were ironies in this: her deregulation of television spawned the countercultural experiments of cable television and the fourth national television channel; her vital reform of trade unions strengthened their legitimacy among their own members; her re-negotiation of Britain's financial contributions to the E.C. made it more popular at home. She was, evidently, wedded to an agenda larger than herself, an agenda now enlarged by her economically conservative, socially liberal successor, John Major.

Mrs. Thatcher was loathed by British intellectuals for her petit bourgeois philistinism. They had a point. Her only remark upon visiting Venice for a summit was that she thought it needed a "lick of paint." But Oxford University's refusal to grant its alumna an honorary degree reflected more upon their insecurity than her lack of qualifications. The intellectual steel of her critique of British society was such that the Labour Party is now a virtual mirror image of the Tories. And, besides, to ask irony and subtlety of a political reformer is to miss the point. In 1979 Britain had plenty of irony. It will now have considerably less iron.

NOTEBOOK

FREE ADVICE (AND WORTH EVERY PENNY): According to a report in *The Los Angeles Times*, Mario Cuomo has been offering advice on how George Bush might find his "way out" of the present awkward encounter with Iraq. In a recent California appearance, the governor of New York said that the president should recognize that Saddam Hussein can't fully accede to American (and global) demands that he leave Kuwait, because if he did he "could not survive in Iraq." Given Hussein's domestic dominion of terror, it's not at all clear that this is so. But it's axiomatic in Mr. Cuomo's prescription. "You could negotiate," he suggested, "something that gets them out of Kuwait, for the most part, leaves them maybe a little bit on the water, maybe a little bit of the oil. . . ." This assumes Hussein wants peace, and maybe he does; but he wants something else, too. The solution Mr. Cuomo proposed in California would give him both. A few days later, in a conversation with William Safire reported by Mr. Safire in his *New York Times* column, Mr. Cuomo retreated to the position that he had been analyzing, not proposing. On the question Mr. Safire then put to him—settlement or war—the governor was, as is his wont, ambivalent. But he did say that a "reasonable" denouement to the crisis would have to include "something to obliterate this man's capacity to use nuclear and chemical agents against the world." Presumably this would require something more than the notion Mr. Cuomo had floated in California—that "a United Nations task force go over the whole question of chemical weapons . . . and this movement toward nuclear capacity." (U.N. task forces have their virtues, but obliterating things is not among them.) In any case it would be nice to know what Mr. Cuomo does think on this point.

ODD COUPLE: It was a little nauseating to watch President Bush chatting à deux with Hafez Assad in Geneva. We understand the realpolitik reasons for welcoming Syria into what passes these days for the cohort of civilized nations—reasons that are oddly like those that were given, not so long ago, when Hussein's Iraq was itself being embraced for beating up on Iran. There is a difference, though: Syria would be about as big a factor in a war with Iraq as would be, say, Malaysia. The 7,500 troops Assad has dispatched to the Gulf were accompanied by a caveat that they would not be permitted to fight on Iraqi soil. Nor would they be missed by General Schwarzkopf if they'd been kept at home. The real reason for all the chummy attention to Assad is the administration's desire for Arab cover for its Middle East venture. But even James Baker seemed uncomfortable standing next to Ali Abdullah Saleh, the president of Yemen, in Sana, its capital. Saleh is not a mass murderer like Assad, he's just a standard Middle East thug. His claim on the world's attention is that Yemen is a temporary member of the U.N. Security Council. So off goes the secretary of state to supplicate him to support the administration's Gulf policy. In fact, there was no chance Yemen would reverse its oft-repeated pro-Iraqi stance, which expresses its long-term resentments against Kuwait, and against Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had dealt swiftly with Yemen's enthusiasm for the Iraqi invasion by deporting close to half a million Yemeni guest-workers. Imagine, then, the contempt the House of Saud must have felt for Mr. Baker as he listened mutely while his host lashed out at the American presence in the region. This was, at best, a chore for a deputy assistant secretary. It would have been different had Mr. Baker's presence in Sana been the prearranged price of Yemen's prearranged acquiescence to our intervention against the Iraqi aggression. There would have been a little dignity in that, if only a little.

DECK THE HALLS: The armchair generals have been saying that President Bush is constrained by the calendar as to when he could or could not give the order to fire. In the eyes of these strategists, it's all about holidays. Well, they turned out to be right that he wouldn't start it on Thanksgiving. And maybe they'll be right that he wouldn't ruin the Christmas of our armed men and women either. But they're also saying that Mr. Bush couldn't really force the Iraqis (or the Saudis, for that matter) to fight during the holy month of Ramadan,

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which begins in mid-March. This makes the president sound very gentlemanly and his counselors very learned. But in 1973 October coincided exactly with Ramadan, and that's precisely when three Muslim states launched the Yom Kippur War.

SMALL PRINT: Last week's issue was misnumbered. It should have been Volume 203, number 24, not 25. This issue is number 25. And please set your watch back one hour. ●

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE RACE CARD

By Fred Barnes

The morning after Election Day President Bush made a rare appearance at the 7:30 senior staff meeting at the White House. He delivered a pep talk. We've had a tough couple of weeks, he said, but the election is over. We didn't do badly. (Republicans lost nine House seats, one Senate seat, one governorship.) Now we've got "to get to work governing." Bush said he wants "a positive civil rights proposal" to send to Congress in 1991 as one of the administration's major initiatives.

Not a soul at the White House, including Bush, thinks the new proposal has the faintest chance of passing Congress. (It will probably meld elements of the civil rights bill Bush backed last year with "empowerment" measures to aid the poor.) But the proposal is important anyway. It will help establish the context for Bush's use of quotas as a re-election issue. The White House expects the 1990 scenario to repeat itself in 1991: Congress ignores the Bush proposal and passes the Kennedy-Hawkins civil rights act again, prompting Bush to veto the measure once more as a "quota bill." This, in turn, means quotas are likely to be "a very salient issue for the next two years," says Charles Black, the chief spokesman for the Republican Party. "It's a galvanizing issue among core Republicans and conservative Democrats." These are precisely the voters Bush wants to energize as his base in 1992.

The White House approach to quotas has changed in one respect. Before November's election, Bush and his senior advisers (except Vice President Dan Quayle) feared his veto would be used effectively against him and Republicans. In campaign speeches Bush gingerly cited his stand against quotas. Now the White House is ready to jump on the issue aggressively. There's little interest in negotiating a compromise civil rights bill with congressional Democrats. "No one wants to go through what we went through last time," when lengthy negotiations proved unsuccessful, says a senior White House official. The new attitude is a product of the 1990 election. "There was more support [for Bush's position] than we thought," the official says.

For one thing, black Republican candidates didn't abandon Bush. In Connecticut Gary Franks, a black businessman, loudly backed the president's veto and won a House seat. In Ohio Ken Blackwell, a former housing official in the Bush administration, also endorsed the veto. He lost 51-49 in his House race, but in general Republicans suffered little for opposing the Kennedy-Hawkins bill. "There's no evidence Democrats helped themselves in the black community with this issue," says Black. In fact, the exit poll conducted for the TV networks found that Republican congressional candidates received an astonishingly high 22 percent of the black vote. The lone senator who lost, Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota, told a White House official that his flip-flop on Kennedy-Hawkins hurt his campaign. He voted against the bill, but in favor of overriding Bush's veto.

What made an even stronger impression on White House officials and Republican strategists was the success of Jesse Helms and Pete Wilson in exploiting the quotas issue. These are quite different Republicans, Helms an archconservative, Wilson a pro-choice moderate. And they were running for different offices in vastly different states. Helms, seeking his fourth Senate term in North Carolina, turned to quotas in desperation ten days before the election. "I can't tell you we planned it or polled it or calculated it," says Carter Wrenn, Helms's campaign manager. "We responded to what happened." Helms was even or trailing slightly when Democrat Harvey Gantt criticized him for voting to sustain Bush's civil rights veto. "People had been urging us to use the quota issue," says Wrenn, "so we put an ad on to answer Gantt." It showed a white man getting a rejection slip because a minority quota had to be filled, and accused Gantt of supporting quotas. (Gantt denied this.) The result: the earth moved. Voter turnout rose 500,000 over 1986, matching the turnout of 2 million in the 1988 presidential race. Wrenn says he never figured turnout would soar like that, but he knew from polling data that voters who normally vote only in presidential years are white conservatives. Helms needed them. He won 54 percent to 46 percent.

In California Wilson leaped on the quotas issue as soon as Dianne Feinstein won the Democratic nomination for governor in June. In the primary she'd called for "gender balancing" on state boards and commissions and for quotas in state hiring. "We have pledged to appoint women in proportion to their parity of the population—50 percent. To appoint people of color in proportion to their parity of the population." (California is 62 percent white, 25 percent Hispanic, 7 percent black, and 7 percent other minorities.) In speeches Wilson said Feinstein's quota plan was "insulting" to women and minorities hired for their qualifications.

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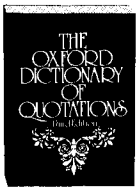

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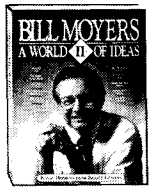

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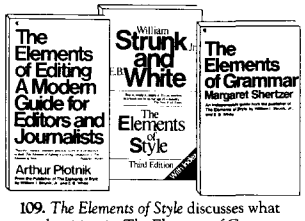
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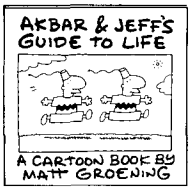

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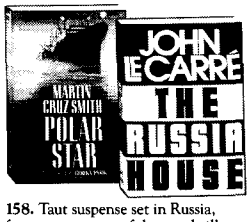

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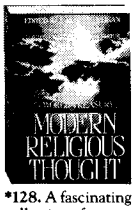

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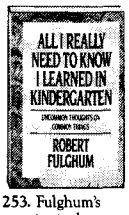

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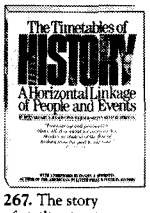

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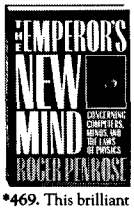

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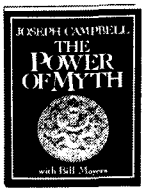

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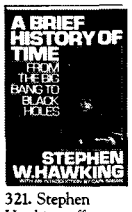

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Then, in a TV commercial, the Wilson campaign showed newspaper headlines to play up the issue. She "has promised as governor to fill state jobs on the basis of strict numerical quotas—not experience, not qualifications, not ability . . . but quotas," the ad said. It didn't lock up the governorship for Wilson. But it "deepened" his support among voters repelled by quotas, insists Don Sipple, Wilson's media consultant. Black believes the issue helped Wilson win a healthy 40 percent of the Hispanic vote, "but I can't prove it." By late summer Wilson was in control of the race. He won 49 percent to 46 percent.

White House officials now point gleefully to Democratic discomfort with the quotas issue. Paul Goldman, the Virginia Democratic chairman, says Democrats are being "squeezed," losing among both whites who detest quotas and blacks who don't think Democrats are fighting hard enough for the civil rights bill. He engineered a resolution of state party chairs in November calling for quick passage of the bill in 1991. Otherwise black turnout, crucial to Democratic victory in many states, will continue to drop because of disillusionment. Goldman says Democrats must also argue forcefully that the bill won't create quotas. "You can't let the other side dominate the language of the debate," he says. Bush managed this in 1990 by claiming early on that Kennedy-Hawkins was a "quota bill."

Paul Tully, political director of the Democratic National Committee, says Bush is forced to exploit quotas because he doesn't have much else to talk about. Bill Bennett, Bush's choice to succeed Lee Atwater as GOP national chairman, has already raised the issue and will milk it "from start to end" of the presidential campaign, Tully says. But "playing the racial card," as Tully calls it, is dangerous and could blow up in Bush's face. Tully is right. I think the issue is legitimate, but only if Bush handles it correctly. Intentionally stirring racial fears is wrong; opposing quotas as both unfair and restricting opportunity is perfectly proper. The issue is also most effective when used defensively. "To raise it out of the blue has some significant risks," says Sipple. The main one is that the charge of racism might stick. "You need to have context for it," Sipple says. "You're going to take the hit, which we tried desperately to avoid, of racism." By leaping on the issue only after Feinstein had broached it, Wilson easily brushed aside the racism charge.

As luck would have it, the context in 1991 is likely to be perfect for Bush's embrace of the anti-quotas cause. He'll have his own bill to cite as evidence that he's not against new civil rights legislation. Of course, Democrats could thwart him by passing the Bush bill or expunging the quota-inducing provisions of Kennedy-Hawkins. Fat chance. Or they might override his veto of Kennedy-Hawkins this time. That's unlikely. Given what happened in the 1990 campaign, I expect the bill to have fewer supporters, not more. Here's the advice of Helms's man Wrenn: "If Bush is running and they attack him for vetoing the civil rights bill, he'd better answer it and explain why." Bush is often fuzzy and inarticulate, but he's up to handling that chore. ●

SANTIAGO POSTCARD

AMNESTY HOUR

By Tina Rosenberg

The news in post-Pinochet Chile over the past few months has revolved around two kinds of amnesties. The first is the Amnesty Law of 1978, in which the military junta pardoned itself for all crimes committed up to that year, thus legally erasing the vast majority of the human rights violations of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Three months ago the Supreme Court, whose justices were appointed during the Pinochet government, reaffirmed the law, adding that it also prohibited judicial investigations of pre-1978 crimes, even if the guilty were later pardoned.

The Amnesty Law lies at the center of the national debate in Chile: What to do about Pinochet and his men, who killed 2,000 Chileans, "disappeared" between 800 and 1,000 others, and tortured perhaps another 50,000. The opposing slogans in the debate are "Truth and Justice" (read: trials) and "Peace and Reconciliation" (read: forgetting). Working in favor of Truth and Justice is the fact that Chile has a lawyer's soul. Chileans believe that society has some basic rules that folks should live by. This view has both reinforced and been reinforced by Chile's 150-year history of democracy before Pinochet. On the other hand, there is the abiding power of Pinochet—the glaring exception to Chile's respect for law—who now commands the army and has threatened God-knows-what if the Amnesty Law is overturned. And Chile's lawyer's soul, paradoxically, can work against justice as well. The Amnesty Law is a travesty of justice, but it is written down, and once a law is on the books, Chileans tend to follow it.

The other amnesty is Amnesty International, in the news for the first time since the founding of Amnesty's Chilean Section in 1978, but principally on the entertainment pages. Amnesty had invited Sting, Peter Gabriel, New Kids on the Block, Sinead O'Connor, Ruben Blades, Wynton Marsalis, and Jackson Browne to play, along with Spanish and Chilean groups, in a two-day concert to celebrate human rights worldwide called "From Chile . . . An Embrace of Hope." The concert was held on October 12 and 13 in Santiago's National Stadium, Pinochet's principal concentration camp in the weeks after the coup. More than 12,000 were detained in the stadium, most were tortured, and hundreds did not leave alive.

A few hours before the concert started I walked through the cold, concrete passageways in the bowels of the stadium to Amnesty's office with Marcelo Montecino, Amnesty's photographer. He paused in front of

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the adjoining door. "I've been here before," he said. Montecino had been held in that room following his arrest seventeen years and two weeks before, three weeks after Pinochet's coup, after taking pictures of the relatives of prisoners and the soldiers outside the stadium. "I spent my detention figuring out what kind of revenge I would take on my captors," he said. "I have to admit, I never thought of this."

The concert had been two years in the planning. Amnesty's 1988 "Human Rights Now!" world tour could not come to Chile, for obvious reasons, so Amnesty scheduled a concert in Mendoza, Argentina, and 15,000 Chileans crossed the border. Pinochet had lost his plebiscite just ten days before, paving the way to free elections, and we celebrated noisily, especially cheering Sting's performance of "They Dance Alone," which he wrote about the relatives of the Chilean disappeared who do a traditional folk dance without their missing partner. At the next Amnesty general meeting in Dublin, Santiago Larrain, the head of the Chile Section, pulled aside Jack Healey, head of the U.S. Section and world tour organizer. "Let's think about Chile," Larrain said.

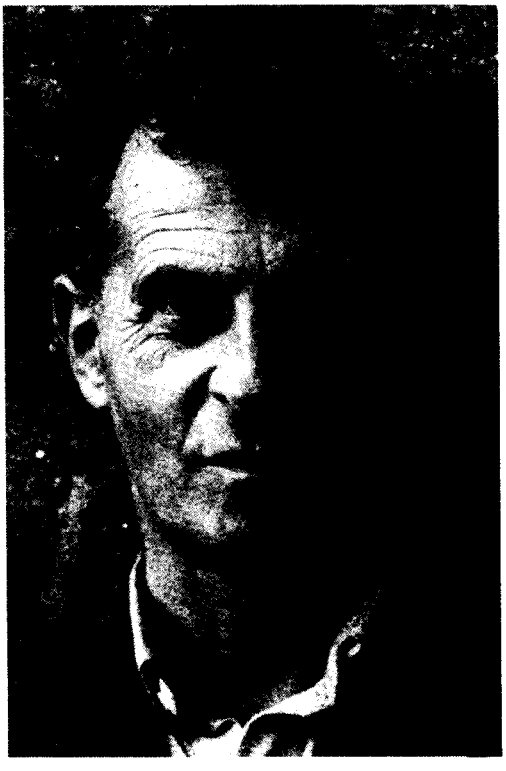
The Chile Section had grown to be the largest in the Third World, with 2,000 members, despite the tribulations of life under Pinochet. I had been a member of the section for a few years and had just moved back to the United States when Larrain called me, in May 1990, to work on the concert for the Chile Section. Working with a poor, small section alongside the rich and powerful U.S. Section gave me a new perspective on First World/Third World relations. The U.S. Section kept announcing more artists, imported lights, imported sound, imported TV equipment. It was the biggest and best concert in the history of Latin America. And the most expensive.

With the arrival of democracy and, more to the point, Sting, everyone was talking about Amnesty. Beginning in September, more than 500 letters a week poured into our shabby offices from Chileans who wanted to join. Larrain preached Amnesty's gospel with countless formerly pro-Pinochet TV talk-show hosts. The Amnesty staff, never comfortable with seeing uniformed men in the doorway, got used to the fact that police were now visiting in search of free tickets. "The only group we haven't heard from is the Retired Torturers Association," said my assistant, after turning away two Investigations detectives.

It was part of the Chileans' shameless attempt to erase all previous connections to Pinochet. The champion, I was told, was Juan Guillermo Vivado, the anchorman for the state-run television channel, TVN. On March 11, the day Pinochet turned over power to Patricio Aylwin, Vivado began his broadcast by intoning his thanks to Pinochet for saving Chile from communism. Then the station cut to the inauguration ceremony. An hour later Vivado was back on the now-democratic TVN, announcing an upcoming broadcast of a ceremony in the stadium, "where thousands were tortured after the 1973 coup."

Still, the sudden conversions were better than the alternative. Leading the unrepentant is Pinochet, who

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN: THE DUTY OF GENIUS
A BIOGRAPHY BY RAY MONK



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has been stating that history will vindicate him and, even more strangely, hints that he might run for president in 1993. The police too continue to demonstrate that they learned their manners under Pinochet. Investigations detectives are still torturing prisoners. One of Amnesty's volunteers, arrested for no particular reason other than scruffiness, spent a day in jail watching police beat up several friends. "We're still smarting from what happened on March 11," police told him.

During one set Jackson Browne dedicated a song to two journalists in military jail for "slandering the armed forces," a crime passed under military law that the government, lacking the votes for constitutional reform in congress, had not yet annulled. Neighboring Argentina, after thirteen military coups since 1930, got into the habit of simply annulling laws new governments find inconvenient; Argentina's legal casualness was one reason there had been thirteen military coups. Chile is too serious to annul its laws. But that is also why Chilean journalists were in jail and Argentine journalists were not.

The same was true of the Amnesty Law. To open the legal doors to Argentina's trials, President Raúl Alfonsín annulled a self-amnesty passed by the generals. Aylwin will do no such thing, but in May he did set up a Chilean version of the Argentine Commission on Disappeared Persons, which had produced the report "Nunca Más"—Never Again. In the wrenching Truth/Justice vs. Peace/Reconciliation dispute, the commission tries to meet everyone halfway. It is called the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission." The eight commissioners range from Gonzalo Vial, a Cabinet minister under Pinochet, to José Zalequett, who became president of Amnesty International after Pinochet kicked him out of Chile. The commissioners and their sixty staff members are still interviewing witnesses and relatives of victims and will produce a report in February addressing each case of death or disappearance. But because it is not a judicial body, the commission has no subpoena power and will not name the guilty. It will not deal with cases of torture. Its report will satisfy neither Pinochet's side, many of whom believe the killings were justified, nor his opponents, who want to see the guilty punished.

So the relatives of the disappeared will have to be content with symbols. Sting closed the show at 3 a.m. on the second night with "They Dance Alone." The rest of the artists and the Mothers of the Disappeared, wearing white and bearing photographs of their loved ones, joined him on stage. Then one of the mothers played a *cueca* folk dance on a single guitar as another woman danced. The 80,000 people in the crowd—some of whom had been there twelve hours—were hushed. They held up matches or torches of rolled newspaper. Then the last strains of the guitar died away, and the artists and mothers filed off the stage, the exorcism complete, the ghosts of the National Stadium able to rest in peace, if not in Truth and Justice.

TINA ROSENBERG is a visiting fellow at the Overseas Development Council. Her book, *Children of Cain*, is forthcoming from Morrow.

News from the files of the KGB.

AGENTS PROVOCATIVE

By Eric Breindel

The much-touted new book *KGB: The Inside Story*, by Cambridge University professor Christopher Andrew and the former chief of the KGB's London Residency, Oleg Gordievsky (a 1985 defector to England), will likely reopen questions about Soviet espionage in the West that most American intellectuals have been unwilling to grapple with for decades. The book is based on KGB files, which Gordievsky combed while preparing a classified in-house history of KGB activities in 1980. It focuses in part on Soviet espionage in the United States. Andrew and Gordievsky contend that Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, Harry Dexter White, and others were Soviet spies, and that these agents, and others, did a great deal of damage.

The authors also treat Soviet espionage in Britain, reviewing the Philby-Burgess-Maclean-Blunt affair and even purporting to reveal the long-sought name of the "Fifth Man" (John Cairncross, a former British official who held a number of sensitive posts during and after the Second World War). But this study will likely cause significantly more debate here than in England—for a simple reason. By and large the British have come to terms with the fact that there was significant Soviet penetration of their government, and that this had serious policy implications. Denial isn't possible because many of the "accused" actually confessed, and some (Philby, Burgess, and Maclean, for example) even went to live in Moscow. Nor is it necessary: England never had a Red scare or a McCarthy era. Acknowledging Soviet penetration didn't represent an admission that an entire historical era had been corrupted.

The United States, of course, did experience both a Red scare and a McCarthy era. Most of the accused, moreover, protested their innocence—some to the very end. And a debate that in Britain didn't even have much of a partisan cast (Labourites often proved more insistent than Conservatives that long-held secrets be revealed) took on transcendent ideological significance here. In the eyes of many Americans, either HUAC and McCarthy were right—in which case the New Deal was little short of a Communist plot—or everyone charged with subversion during that whole period was entirely innocent. This all-or-nothing view makes very little sense four full decades after Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury. In the end, it is perplexing that mainstream historians have left virtually unexamined

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the question of how American officials who served Moscow actually damaged U.S. policy interests. And it is bizarre that for so long, this question should have been regarded as a concern present only in the precincts of the far right.

The most arresting and highly publicized material in the book is the Harry Hopkins "revelation." A misguided October 15 *New York Times* headline proclaimed that Andrew and Gordievsky label Roosevelt's right-hand man and closest personal aide as an "unwitting [Soviet] spy." In fact, the book advances no such allegation. (The headline was the subject of a "correction" several days later.) The authors actually describe Hopkins as an "unconscious agent." And though Gordievsky reports that a number of KGB officials deemed Hopkins "an agent of major significance," he insists Hopkins was a "patriot with no admiration for either the principle or the practice of communism."

Even though the authors claim that Hopkins played a particularly unusual role in supporting Moscow's concerns during the Second World War, and specifically at Yalta, he was not, they argue, a spy. This last point, of course, corresponds to the view of contemporary Hopkins scholars. Verne Newton, who produced a documentary film on the Iowa-born New Dealer, Hopkins biographer George T. McJimsey of Iowa State University, and Roosevelt scholar William E. Leuchtenberg of the University of North Carolina are, to be sure, skeptical of the whole notion that Hopkins was influenced by the Soviet security services. They note that many influential Americans took positions on U.S.-Soviet relations akin to those adopted by Hopkins during the period in question.

What, then, *do* Andrew and Gordievsky claim? Their key point is that Hopkins was guided to a perspective consistent with Soviet wartime interests (only after Hitler attacked the USSR and, even more, after Pearl Harbor made Moscow and Washington formal allies). This took place, the authors contend, in part due to the fact that among Hopkins's private contacts was a high-ranking NKVD (later KGB) official, one Iskhak Akhmerov. Hopkins is reported to have had several meetings with Akhmerov, who represented himself as a direct link to Stalin. Gordievsky himself, early in his KGB career, met Akhmerov once. He listened to a lecture delivered by the aging former NKVD man and remembers well Akhmerov's account of his dealings with Hopkins. Gordievsky later discussed Akhmerov with a number of senior KGB officials, and reviewed the KGB archive to evaluate Akhmerov's claims.

According to Gordievsky, Akhmerov, a native of Baku, was the top NKVD "illegal" (i.e., false name, no official status, no links to the Soviet Embassy) in the United States during the late 1930s and the war years. As such, he was Hiss's wartime controller and was also the man who tried to recruit former NEW REPUBLIC owner Michael Straight to work for the Soviets. (In his memoir, *After Long Silence*, Straight reports of a recruitment bid by a man he came to know as "Michael Green." Gordievsky learned in Moscow that "Michael Green" was one of the names Akhmerov used during his years in America.)

Akhmerov also served briefly, in 1943 and 1944, as Elizabeth Bentley's link to Moscow. Bentley, a key NKVD Washington-to-New York courier who "turned" and began working with the FBI in 1945, was subsequently a major HUAC witness. Like Whittaker Chambers, she detailed the successes achieved by the Soviets in developing espionage sources in the U.S. government.

The Akhmerov story as a whole makes sense. It seems more than likely that the Soviets would have had one trustworthy man in charge of all their top American assets. Such was certainly the system in Britain with respect to Philby and Company. True, we already knew about Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Harry Dexter White, Hiss, and Straight. But this fills out the story—and confirms that Hiss was still active, as an agent, through the war years. As for Hopkins, his diplomatic sympathies are a matter of record. It is also beyond dispute that he endeavored to remove or transfer anti-Soviet officials in the U.S. government (Loy W. Henderson, head of State's Soviet desk, and Major Ivan Yeaton, U.S. military attaché in Moscow, for example) from positions that gave them influence over U.S.-Soviet relations.

True, Hopkins wasn't the only one to oppose roles of consequence in this area for anti-Communists. Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, joined him in the anti-Henderson crusade. Thus it does not necessarily follow that Hopkins's contacts with Akhmerov led him to adopt these positions on personnel matters. Still, replacing Major Yeaton with the pro-Soviet Colonel Phillip R. Faymonville reflected, to say the least, a concern for Soviet sensibilities. And though it can't be shown that Roosevelt's adviser acted, albeit unwittingly, at the suggestion of a Soviet agent, it would be naive to think the NKVD would *not* have tried to develop a connection to the man who, more than any other, had FDR's ear.

Beyond Hopkins (to whom only a scant few pages are devoted) the authors, for example, review the contribution of White to securing the Soviet economic presence in the Russian-occupied zone of Germany. White, an odd individual who appears to have filled the Treasury Department with Communists yet never himself wanted to join the CP, died in 1948 before finishing his HUAC testimony. A sympathetic White biographer, David Rees, concluded some time ago that White turned over valuable information to the Soviets, although he apparently had a need to pretend to himself that most of the information was going to American Communist officials in New York, rather than to Moscow. Andrew and Gordievsky help fill out the White story, which is instructive in what it tells us about the policy influence one well-placed agent can have.

It seems that White, during the war, was involved in economic planning for the future of Germany. A four-power occupation had already been agreed upon, and

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it was decided that the U.S. Treasury would print the occupation currency. The Soviets, however, unlike the French and the British, wanted direct control over their end of the process, and demanded access to the actual printing plates. The Bureau of Printing and Engraving—as well as State Department officials—insisted that this would make accountability impossible, that the scheme was unnecessary and fraught with danger. But White prevailed, persuading his boss, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr., that failing to cooperate with Moscow would undermine the wartime alliance. White won this internecine policy battle in early 1944; the eventual cost of this enterprise to the U.S. taxpayer is imponderable. But Moscow *did* print as much money as it wished, thereby debasing the occupation currency.

Andrew and Gordievsky also analyze the wartime contributions of the Soviet espionage rings that operated in Washington—in the OSS, Treasury, Commerce, and the various New Deal and war-emergency agencies. That which is already known is supplemented by new and logical information.

In a sense, this book is an early glimpse—a window—into the KGB archive. The reader is reminded, again and again, that the individuals who provided information to the Soviets during the years in question were animated by political faith, not by material concerns. This is a key point. Defenders of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, for example, are most scandalized by the suggestion that Moscow would have used American Communists for espionage purposes. Yet it doesn't require a close reading of Andrew and Gordievsky to recall that this notion of Soviet restraint vis-à-vis U.S. Communists is utter nonsense.

Indeed, Earl Browder, leader of the American Communist Party, shortly before his death, acknowledged to a reporter that some American Communists were in a position to turn over vital information: "We had people who would inform us . . . because they sympathized. . . . We didn't consider it espionage." It's hard to go much higher than Browder (although expelled from the American Party, he was never deemed a "turncoat" by Moscow). Thus the first question isn't "whether," but "who"? The second is to assess the damage.

All in all, Andrew and Gordievsky shed light on a range of historical subjects. Their review of Stalin's paranoid campaign against Leon Trotsky, culminating in the 1940 assassination in Mexico, emphasizes the central role of American Communists but doesn't neglect reference to the help provided, in an early and unsuccessful attempt, by the Chilean Communist poet and eventual Nobel laureate in literature Pablo Neruda. Also, Gordievsky's archive-based assessment of the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, the young Swedish diplomat who saved many Budapest Jews from Nazi hands during the Second World War, is altogether convincing. The KGB defector reports that Wallenberg did, in fact, die in Soviet custody—just as Andrei Gromyko later claimed—in 1947. But Wallenberg did not suffer a heart attack at the age of 35. The NKVD had tried and failed to recruit him in Budapest back in 1945. Further efforts to do so were made in the course of the next two years. They failed as well, and eventually the heroic Swede was shot.

In a manifestly ironic tone Allen Weinstein wrote in *Perjury* twelve years ago that the KGB archive would not soon be opened to Western scholars. Who, back then, could have predicted glasnost, the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, and the razing of the Berlin Wall? But beyond their immediate significance, these events have implications for all who want to confront the past. There will be more books like this one. There may well be documents. There could conceivably come the naming of new names—names more prominent even than those of Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White.

The wise path is to endeavor to place these revelations in the appropriate historical context. Part of this reckoning with the past, of course, will mean reading books like this one and realizing that Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley and others, when they testified to the FBI and before HUAC, were telling the unvarnished truth. The alternative is sheer denial, which will likely leave many more Americans believing that Senator Joseph McCarthy, perhaps even in his tactics, was essentially correct.

ERIC BREINDEL is editorial page editor of the *New York Post* and a syndicated columnist.

There goes another Soviet republic.

RUKH AWAKENING

By Adrian Karatnycky

KIEV

For seven decades the Ukraine has been Europe's hidden nation. Despite the fact that it was a granary for the Soviet Union, the source of one-fifth of its industrial output, and a training ground for Soviet leaders (both Khrushchev and Brezhnev cut their political teeth here), culturally and politically the Ukraine did not exist under communism. But now the second most populous Soviet republic—a country the size of France, with a population of 52 million—is re-emerging, and the linchpin of the Soviet empire is coming loose.

Chernobyl started the process: the 1986 nuclear explosion occurred sixty miles from Kiev, worsening nuclear, chemical, and industrial pollution. Next came a cultural awakening, culminating in Ukrainian becoming the republic's state language. Underlying all of it was the long-suppressed desire of the Ukrainians to re-

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claim the independence won between 1917 and 1921 by their forebears.

The Ukrainian revolution unofficially began last January, when as many as 1 million Ukrainians linked hands in a human chain stretching 300 miles from Kiev to Lvov. In March the democratic forces won more than a quarter of the seats in the republic's parliament (and two-thirds where their candidates were able to register). In June the government and the parliament agreed to a far-reaching declaration of Ukrainian sovereignty, which proclaimed that Ukrainian laws would take precedence over Soviet ones, called for a Ukrainian militia and army, and declared that the Ukraine would become a non-nuclear neutral state. On October 1 half a million Ukrainians marched on the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet in Kiev, demanding the resignation of the government. The protest was part of a day-long republic-wide general strike that, in the view of its organizers, the KGB had derailed by cutting phone lines and disinforming people about the day it would take place. Inexperienced revolutionaries, the Ukrainian strike leaders are unhappy with the fact that only 10 percent of the republic's workers downed tools.

A day later dozens of students began a hunger strike, demanding the resignation of the Ukrainian prime minister. A tent city of more than 500 arose under the shadow of the Lenin monument in the city center. Daily demonstrations of as many as 100,000 students and their supporters tied up city traffic. Within two weeks the authorities agreed to meet some of the students' demands: Prime Minister Vitaly Masol (an old Brezhnev crony) resigned, and the parliament said it would hold a referendum within the next year on whether new elections should take place. Now, the parliament has begun passing laws to strengthen the declaration of sovereignty. In mid-October it voted to give Ukrainian citizens (who make up a quarter of the Soviet army) the right to fulfill their military service on Ukrainian territory.

The political force behind the Ukrainian revival is a coalition known as the Rukh (Movement), the Ukraine's answer to Poland's Solidarity and Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum. Formed a little more than a year ago by Ivan Drach, a middle-aged poet with a paunch and a new-found taste for stirring rhetoric, it now has 700,000 dues-paying members (a threefold increase since last year) and 5 million signed-on adherents. The Ukraine's Communist Party is losing thousands of members each week.

The Rukh ethos is pluralistic. It has a commission on national minorities headed by a Jewish activist, Yosif Zisels. The bonds to other nationalities were formed

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton "When we consider that women are treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit." (letter to Julia Ward Howe, October 16, 1873)

Susan B. Anthony "I deplore the horrible crime of child murder...We want prevention, not merely punishment. We must reach the root of the evil...It is practiced by those whose inmost souls revolt from the dreadful deed...No matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed...but oh! thrice guilty is he who drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime." (The Revolution, July 8, 1869)

Matilda Gage "The crime of abortion is not one in which the guilt lies solely or even chiefly with the woman...I hesitate not to assert that most of this crime of 'child murder', 'abortion', 'infanticide', lies at the door of the male sex." (The Revolution, April 9, 1868)

Mattie Brinkerhoff "When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society--so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that...she has been greatly wronged." (The Revolution, September 2, 1869)

Victoria Woodhull "Every woman knows that if she were free, she would never bear an unwished-for child, nor think of murdering one before its birth." (Wheeling, W VA Evening Standard, November 17, 1875)

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for many Rukh leaders in the gulag. At the Rukh's second official congress in Kiev in October, warm applause greeted speakers from the democratic and nationalist movements of Russia, Byelorussia, Lithuania, Moldova (the new name for Moldavia), Armenia, and Azerbaijan. "The idea of the Ukraine just for the Ukrainians is unacceptable," says Rukh leader Dmytro Pavlychko. Ukrainians represent 75 percent of the population, Russians, 20 percent, and Jews, 1 percent; other minorities include Poles and Hungarians. To win over non-Ukrainians, the Rukh is seeking to replace the notion of a nation-state for Ukrainians with the idea of a republic of Ukrainian citizens—a democratic, minority-friendly nationalism.

Vyacheslav Chornovil, the 53-year-old governor of the Lvov district and another gulag veteran, proposes a federal structure for the future Ukrainian state. "District governments would determine educational and language policy," he told the congress. Such a formula, he insisted, will win over Russians, both in the Ukraine and in Russia, to the cause of Ukrainian independence. He has embarked on a program of rapid privatization of land and housing for the 3 million residents of his district, without Moscow's approval. He said that the democratically controlled local governments of the Ukraine are concluding trade agreements and negotiating the distribution of resources while bypassing the central governments of both the Ukraine and the Soviet Union.

The Rukh congress was a hybrid—part political convention, part cultural happening—in which the hip and the prerevolutionary happily mingled. Young men with shaved heads and thick mustaches sauntered through the crowds dressed in cossack garb. A small band of troubadours dressed in the military uniform of the anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet Ukrainian Insurgent Army entertained the delegates during breaks in the proceedings. Vendors hawked hundreds of new independent newspapers and magazines that are reaching millions of readers.

At a concert held in honor of the congress, Sister Vika, a post-punk band, belted out angry songs about urban youth, poverty, and sex. Unlike traditional Ukrainian protest songs, these are not laments, but spirited songs of anger and power. They reflect the sense that the enemy is now on the run. Looking like a cross between Madonna and Sinead O'Connor, and with a funk-accentuated horn section, Vika raps sardonically: "I don't want sausage, don't want butter, don't want fancy dining; / All I want is for the Kremlin's star to keep on shining."

If the fate of the Ukraine is being debated by the Rukh and the contours of the Ukrainian state are being shaped by the political experiments in Lvov and Kiev, where democrats have won control of the city council, its future will be determined in the vast, gritty industrial wastelands of the east. In the coal centers of the Donbass, a political consciousness is emerging—one based on an intense hatred of the "reds." In Donetsk, where at a miners' congress would-be Lech Walesas have launched the USSR's first mass-based free trade union, the radical talk reflects the bleak realities of daily life. One jovial Ukrainian mine-worker leader jokes: "*Komunyaky na hilyaky.*" ("Commies to the gallows.")

In Donetsk only the town center bears the traces of an older, more genteel order. For the most part the city is an eerie mixture of dilapidated postwar housing projects and pollution spewing out of inner-city chemical plants. Food scarcity is nearing a crisis. All food, even mineral water, is sold only to those who have a passport to prove they live here. Recently a young Donetsk worker, unable to feed his family, hung a noose over the Lenin statue in the city's central square and hanged himself.

After the miners' congress Yuri Boldyrev, an intellectual who has emerged as a key leader of Donetsk workers, rushed off to Kiev for an all-Ukrainian meeting of strike committees to plead for a "common anti-Communist front" to unite the Rukh with the less nationally conscious workers of the Donbass. Boldyrev, an ethnic Russian, may not be so eager for Ukrainian statehood, but he recognizes that realpolitik requires a coalition with the main democratic force in the Ukraine.

Indeed, much of the breach that long separated east from west is rapidly being traversed. This summer half a million residents of the area around Zaporozhye, in the southern Ukraine, gathered for a kind of Ukrainian Woodstock. Ostensibly a celebration of 500 years of cossack glory, the event was an exercise in mass consciousness-raising. Nationalists from Kiev and Lvov used the traditions of the fiercely independent cossacks to reawaken local sentiments for independence from Moscow. It seems to have worked. In recent months busloads of political activists from the western Ukraine have been traveling to the smaller cities of the east and south, recruiting new converts to the Rukh and setting up small centers to organize for future elections.

In September 1989 the Rukh supported a cautious coalition with the reform elements of the Communist Party. Now the Rukh has backed Ukrainian statehood and has voted to exclude Communists from its ranks. Ukrainian parliamentary deputy Oles Shevchenko predicts that within a few months the Rukh will be entering into roundtable talks with the Communists: "In the face of widespread economic collapse, I am sure that the authorities will ask us to form a government." Indeed, under growing public pressure (an October 1990 poll shows Ukrainians favoring secession by two-to-one) many of the Rukh's demands have already been adopted by the Communist-controlled Ukrainian parliament. Barring a military crackdown, by next year the Rukh's program for an independent democratic state is likely to be implemented—by a government in the Rukh's hands.

ADRIAN KARATNYCKY is co-author of *The Hidden Nations: The People Challenge the Soviet Union* (Morrow).

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GAY LIFE, GAY DEATH

By Andrew Sullivan

In the living room of a friend of mine, there's a coffee table crammed with photographs. One stands out: four young men in tuxes taken three years ago. They're all grinning, in classic college-buddy group-shot mode. Of the four, two are now dead. One died two years ago, the second in early November, when Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), the cancerous lesions common to people with AIDS, entered his lungs. Tom, the third of the tuxes, was diagnosed with the AIDS virus (HIV) five years ago. He found out his status soon after burying his lover of four years, who also died of AIDS.

Three years ago, despite treatment with the anti-viral drug AZT, Tom came down with his first major AIDS-related infection. His skin is now covered with KS. Because of an intestinal infection that doesn't enable him to digest food, an intravenous drip is connected to his heart and feeds him fourteen hours a day. His immune system is so weak that the plastic line keeps getting infected, so he has to go into the hospital from time to time to have it replaced. His lover of the past five years, Steve, the fourth tux, is HIV-negative, and is preparing for a new life on his own. Five in their close circle of friends have died in the past month alone.

This kind of familiarity with death is unique in modern times. With the advent of effective hygiene and medicine, death has long since ceased to be common among young people. If anything, death has grown more distant for the majority, a tragedy occurring either very occasionally in the otherwise healthy or among the old and frail, who are safely hospitalized beyond our immediate awareness and responsibility.

But for gay men in America in 1990, none of this applies anymore. Death is less an event than an environment. One hundred thousand people have now died of AIDS. This year almost as many have died as died in all the previous years put together. Ten times as many will die as have died. More young men have lost their lives to AIDS than died in the entire Vietnam War. Forty percent of these deaths have been among i.v. drug-users and others of both sexes. (Nothing here is designed to diminish their predicament.) But 60 percent have been among gay men. While the outside world thinks the worst is over, 800,000 people, on the lowest estimates, now face the hard task of actually dying.

This fact is transforming life for an entire section of America. Largely invisible and almost incomprehensible to outsiders, gay men and their families now live lives alien to modernity's rhythms. Death is ubiquitous. Friends and lovers die with random, rapid consistency. Time horizons shorten. Death is mentionable again. Indeed, it is unavoidable. Gay men now live essentially as medievals among moderns: habituated to mortality in a world of health, besieged by death in the midst of oblivious life. The gay cities within cities in America are in this sense medieval communities. The dying coexist with the living, and the dead clutter the address books of the dying as bones once festooned the charnel houses of medieval city-dwellers.

There is a further twist. Gay men must not only live as medievals among moderns, but also live *as* moderns, still wedded to the contemporary alienation from mortality, yet forced into encounters with extinction that the broader culture finds strange, distasteful. This dichotomy—modern and medieval, living and dying—is creating divisions among and within gay men too, divisions as hard to acknowledge publicly as they are privately unavoidable.

It is a commonplace that AIDS has united the gay "community" in newfound fraternity. But this is at best a half-truth. There are, of course, countless stories of reconciliation and courage in the face of the virus. Nothing here is meant to slight the truth of those experiences. But AIDS has also unmistakably widened the rifts among gay men. There are those with the virus, and those who are free of it. There are those who know many who have died, and those who do not. There are those who are dying and those who are not. In this crucible of solidarity, the divisions already in gay society are being cruelly exposed. Socially, racially, politically, AIDS is quietly tearing the gay world apart.

I.

Phil Zwickler is a fiery, stocky, fast-talking former filmmaker who has AIDS. He now runs a newsletter for people with AIDS and recently made a gripping short film called *Fear of Disclosure*, about relationships between people who test positive for HIV and people who test negative. I met him in his small, ramshackle office in downtown Manhattan. His lover, Jimmy, died a few

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years ago. Zwickler was barred from the funeral by Jimmy's family, and lived with the fear that he would die too and the guilt that he may actually have infected a man he loved. All this I learned within minutes, a function of the candor many people with AIDS display. After a few minutes of questioning, Zwickler's candor grew. "I'm angry at you," he said. "I know you won't have sex with me, not because of what I look like, not because of who I am, but because of a virus in my blood."

Perhaps the commonest misconception about the impact of AIDS among gay men is that it is restricted to the sick and the dying. In fact, its impact may be just as powerful among the well and the living. The vast majority of HIV-positive men are healthy and asymptomatic. And no HIV-negative gay man has lived without the risk and fear of HIV infection. Gay life and gay death are not separate issues, meeting occasionally at the bedside or the grave. They are wedded to each other.

The points of contact generate friction, of which Zwickler's passion is a sign. The divide between healthy HIV-positive men and healthy HIV-negative men has not yet been broached in the mainstream gay press. But it's evident in the personal columns: "HIV+ seeks same"; "Fun bright, passionate GWM, 41, 5'8", 148, HIV-, wants to meet similar quality men"; "GWM, 40, 6' 200lbs, looking to meet younger GWM 20-29 for a lasting monogamous relationship. Disease-free as I am." This subtle, pervasive segregation among gay men is a growing feature of gay life. It has its roots in fear, although, paradoxically, not so much the fear of actually contracting HIV anymore. It's quite clear now that the virus is extremely hard to catch. Most gay men assume that kissing, oral sex, and anal sex with a condom are permissibly safe activities. So the phobia of sex with someone who is HIV-positive has an element of the irrational about it, as far as medical risk is concerned. "Fear" merges with stigmatization of the sick. "They're the biggest hypocrites in the world," a positive man told me of wary negatives. "They hide behind this knowledge of safe sex and go to bed with anybody. But as soon as they find out you're positive, they drop you like a stone."

There is also simply the gulf of experience between those with the virus and those free of it. Coming to terms with being HIV-positive is, for many, a transforming experience, and it becomes difficult to form relationships with people whose lives are untouched. "Ultimately," an HIV-negative who'd had a failed relationship with an HIV-positive told me, "that person is having an experience you're not having, and you'll never know him, however hard you try." Another HIV-positive with an HIV-negative lover spoke of the broader difference in attitudes the virus generated. Daily, petty squabbles, which obsessed his lover, seemed irrelevant to him: "I once screamed at my boyfriend, 'There are times when I wish you were positive, because none of these things would mean anything to you at all.' "

This dynamic of mistrust, fear, and stigmatization has further complications. One man whose lover became ill with AIDS told me he found it hard to take the HIV-test, not just because of his own fear of death, but because of the barriers it might have erected between them. He waited until his lover died, and discovered that he was negative. With that, he also saw the real reason for his earlier avoidance: "At the back of my mind, I guess I was afraid that I might have given it to him. That I might have killed him."

The danger of mutual transmission is a constant source of friction, and there is no escape from it. Even an HIV-positive man can be made sicker by re-infection with the virus, whether from his own lover or from someone else. The result is a curious turn of fate. Far from bringing couples closer together or encouraging monogamy, AIDS has actually pushed people apart. It has made intimacy harder, trust less tangible, selfishness more acceptable. It may not be what some have called "sexual apartheid," but it does amount to a kind of sexual and emotional zoning, an invisible wall between men who are themselves walled off from an outside world.

The effects of this can be seen everywhere in gay life, from the cult of the healthy body in body-building to the nervous inquiries on the second date about health. The divisions between HIV-positives and negatives are also reflected in politics. "Queer Nation," a radical offshoot of ACT-UP, the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power, concentrates on countering homophobia with a range of actions from kiss-ins to marches urging gays to bash back against anti-gay violence. To outsiders they seem just one more gang of gay activists. Among some AIDS activists, however, they're known as "ACT-UP for Negatives," people for whom the fight against AIDS is not so personal and therefore not so desperate. San Francisco's ACT-UP recently split between a faction focused entirely on AIDS and another more concerned with other gay issues. Behind the split lay positive-negative tensions. Alongside the usual rifts in any activist group between radicals and moderates, assimilationists and separatists, in today's gay politics there's the added factor of who has HIV and who doesn't.

These tensions inevitably lead to a raising up of the drawbridge of emotional commitment, to a retreat in the face of fear. In some ways safe sex is the apotheosis of this self-isolation. Safe sex can be the outcome of a life in which certain risks—of love, commitment, selflessness—are less likely to be taken. It's revealing that, according to safe sex counselors at Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the premier AIDS-care organization in New York, the most common "relapsers" from safe sex are not promiscuous, anonymous experimenters, but couples in long-standing, healthy, monogamous relationships. By protecting themselves against the virus, gay men also find themselves protected against intimacy.

This has led not to an abandonment of sex, but to a revival of it. As sex has become not merely physically but emotionally safer, it's become more popular. The back rooms, bath houses, and compulsive anonymous sex of a decade or so ago may have gone. But so too has the terrified celibacy of the first stage of the epidemic.

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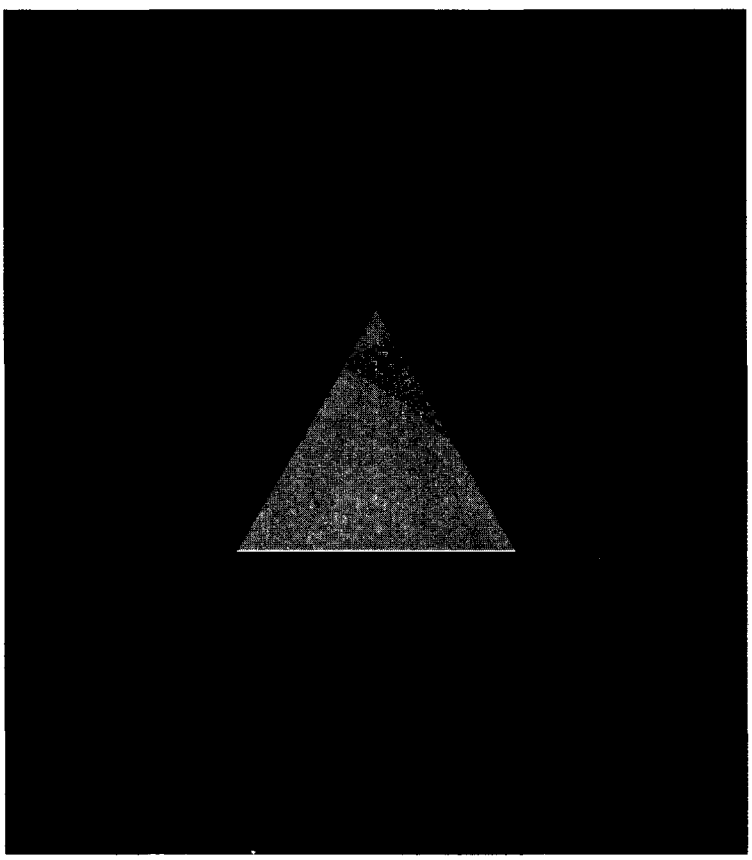
"Sex is completely glorified and accepted. A '70s culture has come back," a young gay journalist told me.

The club scene has also experienced a revival. Two of the more popular New York bars these days are The Men's Room and Sod-O-Mee. The former is a pounding cavern, with sixty-foot ceilings, slides of nude men on the walls, and go-go boys, steroid-pumped to bursting, gyrating on boxes amid hundreds of mainly shirtless men. The latter looks like any small dance club, with one difference. Above the dance floor there's a giant video screen showing pornography as the somewhat conventional crowd below bops to Madonna. All along the bar, video screens show the same genital images. Go-go boys in cellophane jockstraps sway in front of them. It's a symbol of a new sexuality: sensual, garish, safe, for the first time a full reflection of the phrase "mutual masturbation," in which emotions, as well as bodily fluids, are kept carefully apart.



The new sexuality, however, offers only the chimera of relief. In willful nostalgia, the old Saint club, a legendary gay bar in the East Village that has long since ceased regular business, has been revived. In its heyday it was the focus of 1970s erotica. The old building is now defunct, but the glamorous crowd rents out other clubs to re-create the experience. And, indeed, it feels almost the same: throbbing disco music, near-perfect torsos, omnipresent drugs, and anonymous groping in the dark corners. But the fragility of the forgetting is apparent. The Halloween costume party was held this year at Studio 54, a sacred relic of an era gone by. An HIV-positive man showed up, scantily clad, erotically beckoning, his skin revealing the telltale signs of Kaposi's Sarcoma. He came as a court jester.

II.

Salem United Methodist Church is in the heart of Harlem on 129th Street and Seventh Avenue. One evening last October it was the site of a "Service of Love, Remembrance, and Hope" for people with AIDS. The high point of the "Harlem Week of Prayer for AIDS," it involved several local pastors. Perhaps because of the rain outside, it was a small congregation, with almost as many people up front as in the pews. The music was from the Addict Rehabilitation Gospel Choir, the first hymn: "On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand."

We were called to prayer. The readings were read. A few people paid tribute to those who had died of AIDS. A young man in African garb recited a poem, calling upon all those black men who had died of AIDS to return to the fold of black history: "Jesus is calling, for you and for me. Death is coming for you and for me. Come home, all you who are weary. Come home." A large woman shuffled forward, dressed in a checked cardigan and a flattened black felt hat: "In my little corner of the world," she said, "I saw my son slip away. But I looked to the hills whence cometh my strength. And we kept the faith." Tentative amens echoed through the building.

The service was faintly unreal: a scattering of embarrassed people focusing on death as if it were still an occasional, tragic intervention in normal life. The point of the evening, it turned out, was to force the assembled pastors, who had done very little to acknowledge the scope of AIDS in their congregations, to listen to the Rev. James Forbes Jr., the pastor of Riverside Church.

His text was the parable of the Good Samaritan. His aim was to confront the pharisaism of today's christians toward those with AIDS. He spoke of a gay parishioner. "He asked me, as he lay there dying of AIDS, he said, 'What's God's attitude toward me? . . . Don't tell me something just to cheer me up. Just tell me the truth.' " The church went silent. For the first time that evening, the subject of homosexuality—not AIDS, not i.v. drug use, not poverty—was addressed. "What he wanted to know was not whether God would forgive him, not even whether God would love him, but whether God would *affirm* him." Forbes turned to look at the pastors: "I wonder very much what you would have told him." After an awkward pause, he continued: "There is a part of the Church that can only deal with respectable problematics. But grace is able to deal with any problematic." People

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shifted in their seats. "We have to deal with sexuality. Why do we have to allow Oprah Winfrey to tell the truth before we do?" A handful of people walked out.

AIDS is now affecting black and Hispanic New Yorkers more than it is affecting whites. In 1986, according to New York's Health Systems Agency, 30 percent of AIDS cases were black and 23 percent Hispanic. Now that's 31 and 26 percent, respectively. By 1993 the percentages are forecast at 35 percent and 30 percent. Thirty-seven percent of black and Hispanic AIDS cases are due to gay transmission; and experts believe this is an underestimate, since many black and Hispanic men would sooner admit to being a junkie than to being gay.

This, perhaps, is the most alarming feature of black gay life. In addition to the familiar problems of urban minorities, poor black gay men also have to deal with extraordinary homophobia. In talking to minority men with AIDS, it was hard to avoid the impression that the level of denial is measurably greater, the pain more intense, the isolation more complete than among whites. Stories of hushed burials, of families collecting sons' bodies from hospitals and not allowing friends or lovers to pay tribute, of bashings and neglect are commonplace, and usually told by people who request anonymity. Even among elites—perhaps especially among elites—homophobia is intense. Of the fifty-nine board members of the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, the core minority group in New York confronting the problem, only one, project director Gregory Broyles, is openly gay. He's had to fight hard to get the fact of homosexuality acknowledged at its meetings.

"By being black, I'm separated from the white gay community, and being gay, I'm separated from the African American community," is how Broyles puts the black gay predicament. The black press rarely deals with gay men with AIDS: recent issues of *Emerge* and *Spin*, guest-edited by Spike Lee, for example, focused on the threat to women and children. According to gay black men I interviewed, there is even a belief among many young blacks that only whites are gay, and therefore AIDS is irrelevant to blacks. Lies about the cause of early deaths merely perpetuate this myth. The truth is, a generation of young black men is disappearing in a silence broken only by the occasional, sparsely attended church service.

Take Kevin, for example, although that's not his real name. He lives on a run-down street in the middle of Spanish Harlem, the only black man on the block. He hasn't seen any family members for nineteen years, and most of his friends are white. Few neighbors know he has the disease, although some know he's gay. He has heard women whispering "faggot" on the street as he walks by. It's a term that can be more than psychologically wounding. A man with AIDS on Kevin's block got badly beaten up recently when his neighbors found out he had the disease.

The walls of Kevin's dilapidated apartment are lined with classical music tapes, the floors cluttered with dumbbells, a reminder of the days when he was a body-builder. Twirls of flypaper hang from the ceiling like garlands. Kevin got really sick two years ago. He found he couldn't make his second shift as a security guard because of acute chills. He ended up in the hospital with tuberculosis. Since then he's had pneumonia, herpes, and KS. As we talked he scratched the KS lesions repeatedly, and had recently taken to picking at them with needles to relieve the itching. Halfway through our conversation, he suddenly said, quite calmly: "I can't see your face. I can't see you. I've got these spots in front of my eyes. Strange little horizontal lines." He was probably in the early stages of going blind.

His isolation is triple: race, sexuality, disease. In his first stay in the hospital, for TB, the three had come together: "A doctor came in and said would I like to go to the tenth floor? I said no, and he said wouldn't you like to be with your own kind? And I never knew what that was. . . . So two doctors came in and they said to me like I was getting a Christmas present, they said, yes, you've got it. And I said, got what? And they said, you've got AIDS. I said how much longer have I got? And they said three years at the most." That was two years ago.

When black gay men are visible, and the real cause of their deaths acknowledged, the reaction is often vicious. "All we've ever had is the power of the dick, the power over women," one young black gay man told me. "So if one dick likes another dick, that's a problem. They think: this faggot is in my community. I can't have that." The younger generation seems to be getting more—not less—bigoted. Black role models, like Eddie Murphy, crack jokes about people with AIDS. Rap spews anti-gay venom across the airwaves. As the black family has disintegrated, the pressure on middle-class gay men to get married gets stronger. One man told me the worst comments he had ever had were from women, resentful of a "good man" refusing to have a family.

It's no surprise, then, that the AIDS activist groups are overwhelmingly white. What's odd is their silence about the homophobia affecting minorities. ACT-UP, while protesting the white Catholic Church's stance against safe sex education, has failed to attack black churches that follow the same policy. The Minority Task Force on AIDS (MTFA), the only black group fighting AIDS on the streets of Harlem, holds safe sex workshops in black churches, which are required by pastors not to mention anal sex, condoms, or homosexuality, unless specifically asked about them. According to activists I spoke with, many pastors in Harlem are themselves closeted gay men, who mask their own homosexuality by refusing to acknowledge it in their congregations. Yet ACT-UP has not "outed" these men or even protested their negligence. Such an act, activists explain off the record, would be racist.

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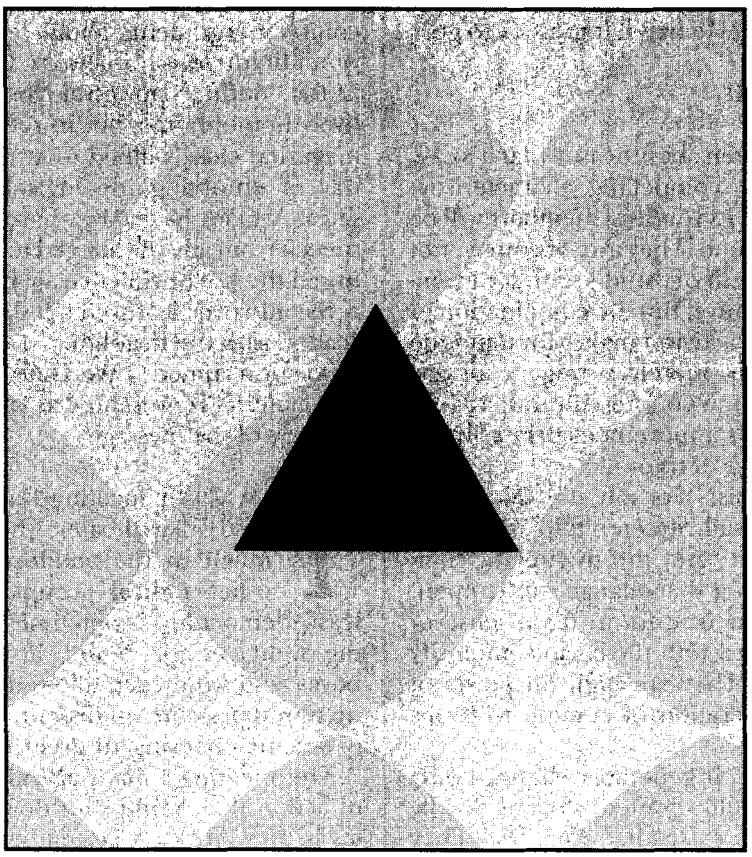
A large part of the minority gay predicament is the result of whites' reluctance to face a problem that does not affect them. But just as problematic as white neglect is homophobia among healthy, heterosexual blacks. One black AIDS activist I spoke with lamented that, if the minority groups fighting AIDS were to disappear tomorrow, nobody but a few white people would care: "Our white allies drive us crazy, but they're still our allies, and our racial compatriots don't give two shits about us." Broyles of the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS complains that elected officials never see blacks lobbying on AIDS, and so it is hard to attract funding. Ronald Johnson, who runs MTFA, blames minority officials as well: "There's not one black or Hispanic legislator who has done a goddamned thing about AIDS in this city, state, or country. And that's disgusting."



MTFA's offices are a few connected rooms in a dilapidated apartment building on 115th Street. MTFA has a handful of staff, and doesn't even have the word AIDS written on its door, for fear of reprisal. The contrast with the gleaming, five-story office block of GMHC—with its designer logo and color-coded office suites—could not be more acute. According to Johnson, the plight of black gay men with AIDS is dire not simply because of all the other problems affecting the sick—crime, poverty, drugs—but because AIDS has not even begun to enter the collective consciousness. Changing behavior is virtually impossible when the very people at risk don't acknowledge that they are at risk. A bathhouse still operates in Harlem. Denial by gay men of their own homosexuality is the norm. Drug use is commonly related to sex: "For black gay men who are still struggling with guilt over their homosexuality, drugs help them get over that guilt hump in order to be able to have sex at all," Johnson explains.

The group most able to help—the educated black middle class—is made up of the very people, according to Johnson, least willing to confront the taboo of homosexuality. The Dinkins administration, he claims, is more comfortable dealing with Tim Sweeney, the white head of GMHC, than with Johnson, who is black: "I broke one of the unspoken rules of the black community: if you're a homosexual, keep it to yourself."

Among Hispanics, the situation is more acute. The rate of infection is growing fastest in this population, yet if anything, the denial is greater than among blacks. Homophobia is arguably more profound among Hispanics than other ethnic groups, but gay sex may be more common. According to gay Hispanic men I interviewed, anal sex is very prevalent among "straight" Hispanic men. One now openly gay man said he'd had far more sex with his straight male friends when he was in the closet than he's had since. The deep taboo, he argued, is not against sex between men as such, but against admitting it and forming relationships. This is exactly the toughest scenario for AIDS education: those most vulnerable to the disease are those least likely to admit they're vulnerable.

The gay Hispanic population in New York is concentrated in Queens and isolated from white gays. There are Hispanic clubs—Studio 88, La Escuelita, The Love Boat—and a Hispanic gay culture, which, according to the few Hispanic men prepared to talk about it, is more close-knit and monogamous than white gay life. This isolation makes access to help difficult, as does the immigrant experience: "Their families don't know, they don't have legal papers, they don't have good access to treatment," explained Luis, an HIV-positive Hispanic man in his 20s. "A lot don't speak English. And they're afraid that if they go to the hospital, they will get deported." He plans to tell his mother about his condition when she visits from the Dominican Republic this month: "It's kind of sad," he points out. "She said one day that if I ever got sick, she would die. The pain will be something like that. So you see how scary it is for me to tell her. Of course, she will not die. She will live."

Among the varieties of gay death, the minority experience is the least accessible. Often the first thing the broader society sees of it is an emaciated black or Hispanic man in a hospital, adamantly claiming he's an i.v. drug-user. And it's no accident that as the disease has shifted to these populations, it has become less visible. In the pew in front of me at the Salem service a thin

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young black man stood on his own. From time to time he left to go to the rest room. Throughout, he mopped his face and neck with small pieces of brown paper, and clutched his body with his arms, cradling himself into temporary comfort. I didn't know whether to talk to him. Those around looked through him, caught in that awkward gap between patronizing and addressing his pain.

After the final hymn, we talked. When his illness became intense, he was forced to live with his mother and give up work. He lived in the South Bronx but was still here at 11:30 p.m., because he wanted "to do something." And besides, he couldn't stand being trapped in bed any longer. He was in touch with GMHC, and was supposed to go to a clinical trial for a new experimental drug that day in New Jersey. He had felt too sick to go.

III.

So much has been written about ACT-UP that it's easy to overlook its most compelling characteristic. Perhaps a majority of its youthful members will be dead in a few years' time. They are, of course, not alone in this. About 30 percent of GMHC's staff, for example, is thought to be HIV-positive. But the combination of nearing death and political activism makes for a unique phenomenon. ACT-UP is not merely a brigade of gay rights activists. It is not even a countercultural crusade for the rights of others. It is a movement primarily designed to prevent the demise of its own.

Most are candid about this: "For me, it's therapy," a wiry, HIV-positive former Wall Streeter told me. "I've always admitted that. But it's not the therapy of comfort. It's the therapy of seeing that change can happen. It's self-empowerment in its true form. It's a sense of *power*." He said this last word with the curious intensity of many ACT-UP members. They are high on power, a high intensified by the liberation of coming to terms with one's own mortality.

The high has a drawback. It generates what can only be called fanaticism. Artfully crafted slogans baldly state the message: "Silence = Death," "We Die. They Do Nothing." One poster shows a picture of New York's commissioner of health, Steven Joseph. The slogan: "Deadlier than the virus." Designed by graphic artists and advertising executives, they have a sharpness that echoes the look of mass advertising and throws it back in the face of its complacent consumers. Stretched across the chests of men who would look at home in Soloflex ads, the logos come close to morbid camp. The result is a kind of designer revolt, an AIDS aesthetic. Halfway through an ACT-UP meeting, the shout goes up: "The merchandising has arrived!" and there's a rush to the T-shirt counter.

This aesthetic is allied to intelligence. The Treatment and Data Committee—a subgroup of ACT-UP—has helped revolutionize federal procedures for the testing of experimental drugs through scrutiny of the bureaucracy and science of AIDS. It has engendered respect and admiration—as well as frustration—among scientists and bureaucrats. Its latest campaign is to make five major opportunistic infections treatable within eighteen months, by speeding up the drug-trials process. In stark contrast to the sometimes hair-raising antics of the rest of ACT-UP, T&D is coldly rational—and effective. T&D pressured Burroughs Wellcome to halve the price of AZT, the only effective (but flawed) treatment for HIV.

Still, there's something unsettling about ACT-UP that is not easily allayed by understanding its context or its success. The intelligence is sometimes distorted by the Manichaean vision of those confronting death. It's a matter of dogma to ACT-UP members, for example, that there's no moral difference between negligent complicity in the AIDS crisis and the act of murder. Yet there are clearly complex arguments about levels of AIDS funding that won't fit into this framework. Cogent arguments also exist for "outing" powerful closeted gay men who are actively homophobic, but in the hands of *Outweek*, a new magazine closely allied to ACT-UP, outing has become a way of enforcing ideological conformity on illiberal lines. Articles in *Outweek* have backed taking away free speech from anyone alleged to be homophobic and have urged the use of violence against straight "oppressors." A recent cover featured a lesbian pointing a gun at the reader, with the headline: "Taking aim at bashers." Another proclaimed: "We Hate Straights." That some of this material is presented as camp merely heightens the ugliness of the message.

The ACT-UP meeting I attended in New York was held in a theater, the drama taking place as much in the auditorium as on stage. Unlike other radical groups, ACT-UP is, internally at least, democratic—sometimes painfully so. The meeting went on for hours, accommodating loquacious bores who were each allowed their say. There seemed no moral pressure on dissent, or even on tedium; merely ecstatic cheering to greet the elect.

The meeting's main agenda was a forthcoming day of action that would shut down the major traffic arteries in New York on December 10. Activists were going to raid the subways, lie down on bridges, clog the freeways, descend into tunnels—all to press the case for socialized medicine. The objections from the floor were ones any sane activist would make: the demo would backfire, it would enrage commuters, alienate potential supporters. It might affect sick people, caught in traffic jams, even cause deaths. And the date clashed with another planned demonstration for national health care.

Little of this carried any weight. At the worry about the sick came a shout from the back: "*We're* sick." At the chance of deaths: "*We're* dying every day." A young woman spoke from the balcony: "This is a great action. This is my *fantasy* action." Someone yelled from the stage: "Desperate situations require desperate means. It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse. If Larry Kramer's sermons haven't moved you, move yourselves!"

Kramer, an HIV-positive playwright in his 50s,

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founded ACT-UP. Sitting on the stage in a large smock, he smiled quietly throughout, like an old, wise child. His presence among the largely young men and women was a little like that of a guru, except, unlike most gurus, his influence was not to moderate the passion around him, or to direct it to more contemplative ends. It was to intensify it. He began the meeting with a soft-spoken announcement that he wanted to set up a group to do target practice, to learn how to use guns against the police and gay-bashers. His point in the demo debate was to back the radicals. He mentioned last year's demo that broke up a mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, and provoked a storm of hostility: "We couldn't have gotten worse publicity than the Church action, and that put us on the map. . . . Don't use the backlash argument as an excuse. They're not going to like us. They hate us anyway."

ACT-UP, as Kramer's brainchild, is not about rational persuasion. As the meeting overwhelmingly approved the action, it was clear it was not supported despite its possible drawbacks, but because of them. "Oh, of course it's a nightmare. That's what I like about it," remarked the man sitting next to me. ACT-UP members wish as much to express a contradiction, to give vent to desperation, as to achieve any particular end. Their politics wills the rejection it courts. "They hate us anyway," as Kramer succinctly put it. In any other group of people, this would be called a death wish. But among the dying, a death wish is also a curious way of staying alive.

It's no exaggeration to say that this wish, the experience of it, the *feel* of it, has changed a segment of gay life permanently. It has replaced strategies of pleading with those of demanding. It has substituted candor for apology. It has absorbed the momentum of the post-Stonewall gay sensibility and gone on the desperate offensive. But at the same time, ACT-UP has inevitably alienated a whole group of gay men—those whose own view of their sexuality is more opaque, whose politics is more complex, whose lives are not so transformed.

"Outing" is the most obvious feature of this rift, a declaration of war by some gay men upon others who are less committed in the struggle against death. Not so long ago the closet was sacred territory. No fellow gay would invade its sanctuary. Now every closeted gay man has to fear the animosity of his fellow gays as much as straights. This is a conscious strategy of intimidation, one that most ACT-UP members willingly celebrate. And when it isn't manifested in hate, it finds expression in scorn. "They're just being left behind," one angry ACT-UP member told me of closeted and apolitical gay men. "They're just not relevant anymore."

By breaking the taboo against aggressively candid homosexuality and the greater taboo against aggressively candid death, ACT-UP has not only strained understanding between gays and straights. It has also torn apart the code of security among gays. In the long run this may turn out for the best, as more gay men acknowledge their sexuality and refuse to be patronized by society as a whole. But in the short run another threat has emerged to the rhythm and unity of gay life. And this one comes from within, and in the rhetoric of transfiguration.

IV.

There is a metaphor in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* that sticks in the mind. At the very end of his life, Ivan struggles against death until finally becoming reconciled: "Suddenly some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light. What had happened to him was like the sensation one sometimes experiences in a railway carriage when one thinks one is going backwards while one is really going forwards and suddenly becomes aware of the real direction."

Since almost the beginning of the AIDS crisis, gay men have had an acute sense of going backward. At first it seemed as if the worst would happen, but there was no massive public backlash, no branding, no quarantine. Then came the more difficult challenge of mass death, often unnoticed and almost always misunderstood. Gay lives quietly and increasingly attained a brutalizing concentration as the number of deaths mounted. As the crisis deepens, it's hard not to concur with one man with AIDS I met in New York: "How strong can we be? How much 'empowerment' does it take? How many support groups do I have to attend to talk about my 'feelings'? Sometimes I feel weak and afraid, and no one can help do anything about it. I hate it when that happens, but it does."

Denial is still there: denial of death, of the racial and viral barriers that exist among gay men, of the costs of cathartic political activity. And with this, an avoidance of the intimacy the crisis demands. At this point, perhaps, it is only fair to say that going backward is an understatement. There is no light beneath us in this hole. The hopeful idea that a community is being forged in the face of death is untrue, not because it is beyond the capacity of gay people, but because there is nothing as isolating as one's own extinction. There is, ultimately, no community of the dying. There are only the dying.

If there is an occasional sense that the railway carriage is actually going forward, it is perhaps in the strengthening of gay identity that has begun to be felt, the knowledge that a new, less ravaged generation of gay men will replace the one that is soon going to be missing, and that it will surely gain something from knowledge of the current horror. There is also the awareness that we have gained subtle, private strength from meeting death in this way. And there is the consolation that at least one myth about gay life, held by gays and straights alike, has finally been put to rest. It is an irony of the isolating nature of death that it is also curiously universalizing. Gay men die like straight men die. Loneliness, it turns out, is not the condition of being homosexual. It is the condition of being human. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Different Sizes

Space is one of the key terms in film discussion, and like every critical term, it has various applications. Renoir's planes of movement within a room are one kind of spatial discrimination. Antonioni's linkage of people to urban vistas is a way of using space as twentieth-century fate. John Ford's view of space dramatizes Frederick Jackson Turner's concept of the frontier principle in American life.

The use of space in Idrissa Ouedraogo's films might at first seem connected with Ford's idea—drama about people-shaped dots in the middle of immensity. Both in *Yaaba*, seen last year, and now in **Tilaï** (New Yorker), everything happens on a huge platter of earth under a huge inverted bowl of sky. Between them, a tiny village. This might suggest Ford. But there is a great difference. Ford's films, which center on white people though they contain Indians, are not called Westerns for nothing: they are about Westerners entering a new domain, different from that of their forebears. Ouedraogo's films, set in his native Burkina Faso, are about people whose forebears never lived anywhere else.

The oddity, to an American viewer, is that these Africans do not seem aware of space. Ford's people—to some extent this includes his Indians—are conscious of the vastness around them and have developed self-sufficiencies to deal with solitude. The Burkina Faso people seem not to know that anyone else lives differently and have no comparisons to make.

Yet there is a relation between their way of life and their awesome environment. The manner in which these villagers speak, beginning every utterance with the name of the person addressed, gives their talk a certain size whether the actual subject is large or trifling. The laws that govern them, laws of marriage and fidelity and the capital punishment for breaching them, seem carved in invisible gigantic rock. The details of their daily lives, those flimsy huts, that frugal food, are small-scale. Their inner lives, conceived in obligation, are large and rugged.

"Tilaï" means The Law. The story is built on an opening fact so simple yet foreboding that it seems like a pronouncement by the chorus at the start of a classic tragedy. A young man returns to his village after an absence of some time to find that his intended bride has been taken and married by his father. Once we know that, we know that blood will be spilled. The Italians say, "*Mort' di fratello, mort' di coltello*" (death of a brother, death by the knife); or, when close relatives quarrel, somebody dies. So it proves.

As in *Yaaba*, Ouedraogo makes the difficulties of his work seem nonexistent. We are never conscious that the people we see are not professional actors. With his knowledge of their lives, with his affinity for truth, Ouedraogo wipes away self-consciousness. Ina Cisse and Rasmane Ouedraogo—presumably he's related to the director—are especially affecting as the filched bride and the frustrated lover. With the cinematography of Jean Monsigny and Pierre Laurent Chenieux, the director brings even the heat of the place to his film—without strain. Every shot in the picture is framed by a sophisticated eye, but we feel the effect of the shot much more than we think about the director's eye.

Tilaï, even at its peak moments, is not greatly moving. Even the deaths seem ritual, rather than personal. But this may be an aspect of the culture. Perhaps the intent is less to wring our withers than to trace, slowly and gracefully, the idea of inevitability. In any case, with the two films seen here, Ouedraogo has already made a unique contribution to world cinema—and has aroused expectation.

What is Anjelica Huston to do? About her talent there is no question. About her chances to use it, many questions. She is in her late 30s; her features are not conventionally pretty; her acting temperament seems to fight for a range of roles. Where is she going to find them? American filmmaking has no place for a female character star. (Bette Davis, unlike Huston, began as an ingenue and leading woman, and only later became a character star.) There's not much point in asking Hollywood to do *Medea* for Huston, but can't they write good scripts for her? As it is, in order to keep working, she signs on for lesser material.

This seems the only explanation for her appearance in a recent nonsense called *The Witches*, where her chief job was to wear grotesque makeups. She has

FILMS WORTH SEEING

C'est la Vie. *Diane Kurys's humane, perceptive account of a French family's summer at a beach. Nothing much that's new, but much that's delicate—especially in Kurys's treatment of children. (Reviewed 12/3/90)* **Dances with Wolves**. *A bit overlong and saggy, but Kevin Costner's first directing job, with himself as star, has scope and thrills. During the Civil War, a Union officer, posted to the frontier, becomes friends with the Sioux and joins them. (12/10/90)* **The Nasty Girl**. *Michael Verhoeven directs cleverly—a touch too cleverly—this account of a young Bavarian woman's attempt to uncover her town's Nazi past. (11/26/90)* **Reversal of Fortune**. *Barbet Schroeder gives sizzle to this sometimes spacy dramatization of the von Bülow case. Ron Silver is Alan Dershowitz, fiercely ferreting. Jeremy Irons sustains the whole picture with his coldly elegant Claus. (11/19/90)* **—SK**

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considerably more reason to appear in **The Grifters** (Miramax), but the role, let alone the picture as a whole, still isn't good enough for her. Get busy out there in the West! Is another national resource to be wasted?

Grifter means con man—or woman. The screenplay was adapted by Donald Westlake from a novel by Jim Thompson. Currently there's a boomlet of Thompson adaptations. In past months we've had *After Dark, My Sweet*, which almost ruptured itself trying to be stark, and *The Hot Spot*, which I didn't see. I can't recall a good film made from Thompson. One of Bertrand Tavernier's weakest, *Coup de Torchon*, is based on a Thompson book. He seems to me a failed James M. Cain. (A sample of his tough dialogue: a woman says to her grifter son, "You sit there telling me what to do—a guy so crooked that he has to eat soup with a corkscrew—!")

The plot is supposed to be a neat, ironic engine of self-destruction, but we care so little about the people, the manipulations are so clumsy, that we merely wait for the finish, more or less patiently. Huston, in a peroxide-blond wig, plays a woman who places horse bets for a gangster chief, picks winners, but skims money off the top for herself. Pat Hingle plays the mobster chief, who tyrannizes her. (Why he needs her to place bets is not clear. He seems to know the horses, and he's not doing any fixing of the races.)

John Cusack is Huston's son, long estranged from her, who works some petty grifts of his own. Annette Bening is his girlfriend, herself a grifter, with sex as part of the come-on. These four tangle in a story that seems to take place in a film noir echo chamber.

Everything that Huston has to do here she does very well, notably her reaction after an accidental killing. But it's all uphill work—we sense that she knows this—because it's all slightly stupid. Bening squirms around a lot, occasionally nude. Jolly Pat Hingle works hard to be nasty. The gaping, irreparable disaster of the film is Cusack. If his part had been given to a young man with some force, even to Matt Dillon, the picture might have had a fighting chance. Cusack scuttles it.

Martin Scorsese was co-producer, which makes this picture the second time in a row he's been associated with bad male casting. (The first was Ray Liotta in *Good- Fellas.*) His co-producers were Robert Harris and Jim Painten, the men who restored *Lawrence of Arabia.* What these three wanted with *The Grifters* is a bigger mystery than anything in the film.

The composer of the labored, hysterical score was Elmer Bernstein. The director was Stephen Frears, the same exceptionally gifted Frears who made *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* and *Dangerous Liaisons.* Apparently he wanted to work in Hollywood and make a real Hollywood picture. Apparently, too, he left his talent back in England. Here he shows no ease, no control, no fluency. He's like a thoroughly English actor trying to play a hard-boiled American. ●

Robert Brustein on Theater

She-Plays, American Style

Two plays by and about women have appeared recently on the New York stage, separated by sixty-two years of sexual politics. They suggest how the passage of time can affect the themes, if not the quality, of female drama. In Sophie Treadwell's **Machinal** (1928), at the New York Public Theatre, a passive heroine seeks freedom through an act of murder; in Beth Henley's *Abundance* (1990), at the Manhattan Theatre Club, a more active heroine seeks freedom through a burst of careerism. Both are preoccupied with issues confronting women in a masculine world. Both have more interest as sociological artifacts than as works of art.

Of the two, *Machinal* is the more engrossing, partly thanks to a well-orchestrated production by Michael Greif. I was not overly fond of this play when reviewing its previous off-Broadway revival (could it have been thirty years ago?). Then, as now, I thought it had value largely as a parade ground for the precision marches of an imaginative director (Gene Frankel in the 1960 version). *Machinal* has all the mechanical simplicity of early American Expressionism—the style that came to us via Germany, through the plays of Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller. Unlike the Expressionistic work of Strindberg, who invented the form as a means of exploring his dream life, German Expressionism was

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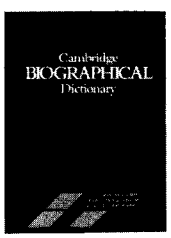

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propelled primarily by socio-political considerations. And it was these implicit Marxist critiques of the system that informed later American manifestations, most notably Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine.*

Like Rice's Mr. Zero, Treadwell's Miss A (otherwise known as Young Woman) is identified by a generic name, and, like Mr. Zero, she works at dehumanizing tasks. After the stage lights go on, industrial lamps are raised, and a stertorous voice announces, "Episode One: To Business" over a large radio mike. The various automatons constituting the office work force begin their mechanical functions: typing, adding, telephoning, mimeographing. Miss A is late ("all those bodies pressing—had to get out in the air"), and when she arrives—a pert little thing in black bobbed hair—her tender ears are assailed by a cacophony of homilies ("The early bird catches the worm," "Haste makes waste").

Machinal is based on an actual story, the Ruth Snyder murder case. Snyder was the first woman to die in the electric chair; the playbill displays a photograph of the execution taken off the front page of the *Daily News* (the headline screamed "DEAD!" in monstrous capitals). This celebrated case inspired a number of fictional works, including James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and an unproduced play by William Styron and John Phillips called *Dead: A Love Story.* Male authors tend to treat Snyder as a ruthless lech who persuaded a hapless lover to murder her wealthy husband. Treadwell, ignoring the complicity of the lover, treats her as a neurotic victim of sexual and social oppression, driven to murder as the only alternative to madness and despair.

Miss A is loved by Mr. J, the vice president of the firm, who repels her, possibly because he can only converse in industrial maxims. (Her choppy conversation, by contrast, seems designed for Western Union: "Kisses? No. I can't.") Still, he represents the one avenue of escape from her uncaring home and unfulfilling work. During their honeymoon, as the hotel chanteuse sings, "I kiss your hand, madam," he tells her dirty jokes and explains the secret of his success ("Learning to relax"). In a scene of revulsion and disgust, performed to the sound of drilling as she cries, "I want my mother," she is forced to submit to his advances, and later bears him a child. When she meets an attractive young man who kills bandits in Mexico (a part originally played by Clark Gable), she falls for him. Her tensions soften; her language changes from telegraphic messages to consecutive sentences. Nevertheless, the lover decides to return to Mexico. Why? "Quién sabe," he shrugs. Increasingly rattled by reality, she conks her husband on the head with a bottle filled with stones, is tried, convicted, and led to the chair while a black prisoner sings spirituals. ("I'm gwine up to heaven," as Lenny Bruce once parodied this kind of movie stereotype and racial slur, "goin' to find out what a 'gwine' is.")

When Miss A is asked in the courtroom why she didn't choose divorce rather than murder, she answers, "I couldn't do that. I couldn't hurt him like that." It is the only startling thought in the play. Otherwise, this tale of a sensitive plant wilting in the age of the machine is declarative, predictable, simplistic. What remains vital and lively, however, are the theatrical possibilities, and Greif sniffs these out like a pig in search of truffles. Jodie Markell as the delicate heroine and John Seitz as the gross good-natured husband both bring drive and conviction to their parts, while the supporting cast performs its choral duties like a well-oiled industrial machine. This *Machinal* has value less as the revival of a forgotten play than as a reconstruction of a forgotten age. Enhanced by David Gallo's setting and Kenneth Posner's lighting, the historical evocation is sufficient to keep us engaged for most of its length.

Both the audience and I were squirming, however, at Beth Henley's **Abundance**. The play makes no sense at all, and when I look at my notes I can't make sense of them either. I sat through this affair in a vague delirium, keeping awake only by watching two women signing the dialogue for the deaf. (They were actually more animated and convincing than the two leading actresses.) Perhaps the whole thing should have been mimed. Henley had the interesting idea of writing a play about a pair of mail-order brides in the Wyoming Territory during the 1860s. This is hardly well-explored ground, but it is so trampled with self-conscious literary ostentation, so overembellished with deliberate eccentricity, that it seems indistinguishable from the playwright's more contemporary fandangos.

Bess Johnson (Amanda Plummer) and Macon Hill (Tess Harper) meet in a railroad station on their way to join two husbands they've never seen. They take an instant liking to each other and vow to be friends—not surprising since they share the same overheated language. ("I'm drunk with Western fever." "I love the ocean; it never stops moving." "I can smell destiny; one day I'll write a novel about it.") The men they meet, on the other hand, have none of their imagination or warmth. Bess's husband (Jack) is a brute who knocks her down and terrorizes her with a pistol, while Macon's (William) is a one-eyed farmer who, though kinder, is physically repulsive to her.

Macon teaches Bess to chase falling stars ("cause I know we can catch one of them"). She also teaches Bess how to whistle, which is something of an achievement, considering Bess's uncertain wits. These soon deteriorate: "For no apparent reason, she seems to have lost her mind." When her child dies, she dresses up her prairie dog in the child's clothes. Jack is also in "an insane condition." In addition to threatening Bess's life, he sets fire to their cabin, which makes her long "for the flutter of angels' wings." Both take refuge with Macon and William. But although William gets a new eye and new mustache to please his indifferent wife, and although Jack continues to act coarsely (he eats William's pound cake), Macon has an affair with Jack, which Bess discovers when she sees Macon give him her combs to hold.

With me so far? OK, but I may lose you now. Bess goes off into the night and is captured by Indians. When she returns years later, partially scalped, speaking in tongues, tattoed on arm and chin, we learn she has been the wife of a chief. Persuaded to write a book about her adventures, she soon becomes a best-selling author. The talk of the town. Sixty thousand copies. Dion Boucicault inquires about adapting it "into a hit play"(!). Jack is now infatuated with her; she treats him like a slave. Macon needs $50 to prevent repossession of her house. Bess refuses. At the end, Bess, having acquired "abundance," comes upon Macon again, a syphilitic crone selling health remedies. She remembers Bess once wanted to reach out and touch a falling star. "Do you still whistle?" she asks. "No," Bess answers. They whistle together at the play's end.

I wouldn't bore you with so much synopsis, but *Abundance* has been respectfully received in some critical quarters, and I wanted you to understand my puzzlement. I found the plotting so random, the characters so arbitrary, and the theme so cloudy that I couldn't imagine why it was written or performed. Ron Lagomarsino's production is only a little less inept than the play. One redeeming feature is Adrianne Lobel's setting—an entirely wooden sculpture of walls and floor that transforms into railroad tracks, cabins, and Western horizons. But Plummer, with her feral demeanor and nagging voice, plays Bess like Butterfly McQueen refusing to birth a baby, and Harper's Macon has the kind of shrill, reedy delivery that makes dogs weep. I guess the intention of this play was to show that women are more bonded to each other than they are to their brutish husbands, and that sexual betrayal therefore violates a sacred covenant. Bess says

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she loves Macon "so much more than anyone else," but it takes about sixteen years for her to forgive the episode of the combs.

In the eighteenth century, the English invented a form called "she-plays." Although written by men, such plays featured not vigorous heroes and active heroines, but errant husbands and suffering wives, while taming the tragic themes of drama into stories of domestic inconvenience. *Machinal* and *Abundance* are examples of modern she-plays by female writers bearing many of the same domestic themes. Although both playwrights are fixed on the victimization of women, however, at least Treadwell is capable of leavening her perception of the predatory masculine world with a passion for social justice. For Henley, the Wild West is mostly a backdrop for intermarital affairs and monosexual friendships. In her cute, eccentric way, she has domesticated a savage episode of American history into a story of broken hearts and damaged hearths, where even the Indian wars are an occasion for discussing "relationships." Implicit in the myth of the West was a dread that civilizing women, with their bustles and combs, would soon come to bridle the male capacity for adventure and heroism (pace *High Noon*), an emasculating process already thought to be in force in the effete East. *Abundance* seems to reinforce that myth from the feminine perspective. ●

The Man Who Would Be France

BY STANLEY HOFFMANN

De Gaulle
The Rebel 1890-1944
by Jean Lacouture
translated by Patrick O'Brian

(W. W. Norton, 615 pp., $22.95)

I.

Jean Lacouture's biography of Charles de Gaulle was published in three volumes in France between 1984 and 1986. It was immediately recognized as the best work on its subject—in a field in which almost 2,000 works have already appeared. Lacouture had written an earlier, shorter book on de Gaulle, which displayed a sharp mind, a critical and often disrespectful wit, and a certain flippancy. Orthodox Gaullists were not pleased. They were delighted, however, by the three-volume biography.

In his writing on decolonization and the new nations, Lacouture had never concealed his *tiersmondiste* sympathies, his dislike of the French and American wars in Indochina, his opposition to French colonialism in Algeria; but now he was more critical of some of those earlier enthusiasms. More important, he had tempered his earlier reservations about the General. Like many previous students of the French leader who started with strong misgivings but kept an open mind, Lacouture succumbed to the pressure of what one of de Gaulle's aides, asked about what de Gaulle had meant to him, had called *l'évidence.*

For it is impossible not to be impressed by de Gaulle's life and works, whatever objections and regrets one may have about one or another episode in his crowded career. One does not often come so clearly in contact with greatness. The strength of Lacouture's biography is owed to the delicate balance between his determination not to be a hagiographer, but to look fairly and incisively at all sides of often very controversial issues, and his admiration for the political skills, the moral stature, the intellectual acumen, the stagecraft and the statecraft of his formidable subject.

The three French volumes amount to 2,500 pages, and yet they seem too short. The life and writings, the speeches and journeys of de Gaulle were so momentous and so stormy that whole volumes might have been written about each episode. Lacouture has read everything there is to read, interviewed anybody who had something to say. What prevents his work from being "definitive" is not any shortcoming in his approach, but the fact that neither de Gaulle's enormous private correspondence nor his state documents are fully available to scholars.

De Gaulle's son, Admiral Philippe de Gaulle, has published a dozen volumes of very useful letters, notes, and memoranda, but it is only a selection, and French law requires us to wait at least ten more years before the still unreleased public and private papers become available. Only then will it be possible to get a clearer picture of de Gaulle's motives and reasonings at certain critical moments, and perhaps to come closer to the private man—insofar as he may have revealed more of himself in his private communications. Until then, the indispensable works are Lacouture's books, and also *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie*, the moving recent memoir by Pierre-Louis Blanc, de Gaulle's former press aide and the current French ambassador to the United Nations.

In English as in French, the reader is carried along by Lacouture's own dramatic skill. His excitement in telling a well-known tale is infectious. The book becomes a story of endless suspense: Will the ambitious young soldier fulfill his ambition to "be great and serve a great cause"? Will his warnings be heard by his compatriots? Will they heed his call to resist after the fall of metropolitan France? Will he establish his leadership despite the clashes with Churchill, the hostility of Roosevelt, the intrigues in France? We know the answers, but Lacouture makes it all fresh.

II.

How does a man become General de Gaulle, a figure with enough self-confidence to break the bonds of military discipline, set himself up against the legally constituted government of his former commander and patron Marshal Pétain, identify his refusal to accept the armistice of June 1940 with the national interest of France, and, in effect, become the self-appointed guardian of that interest? One part of the answer is provided by the conviction that de Gaulle had developed in the '20s and '30s, and often expressed with a bluntness that appeared arrogant to others, about the likelihood of another war with Germany, and the need for France to be fully equipped to win. Having been vindicated after World War I as the champion of armored warfare, having taken the measure of the military and political leaders who had remained deaf to his call and tied to a defensive strategy, he was too proud to lay down his arms, too sure of himself not to try where everyone else had failed.

Another part of the answer lies in the man's profound fascination with statecraft. De Gaulle went into the army, as a young man, not merely because the army was, as he put it in his memoirs, one of the greatest things in the world, but also because this was the only way in which a devoted son of Catholic Monarchists

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could serve France without offending them with overt service in the lay, anti-Catholic Republic. His first book, *La Discorde chez l'ennemi*, begun in captivity in Germany after 1916, attributed Germany's defeat mainly to the failure of the civilian leaders of the Reich to control and direct the military, whose bungling and bullying led to disaster.

And after the war, while ostensibly pursuing a career as a military teacher and thinker, he still had statecraft on his mind. His famous lectures to the Ecole de Guerre, which became *The Edge of the Sword*, describe a style of leadership that is doubly fascinating; largely based on his observations of Pétain's character, the book is even more an anticipation of his own future style, and it goes well beyond the question of military leadership. In a lapidary style, it proclaims the superiority of instinct and intelligence over dogma, and it celebrates the "man of character" who knows how to cultivate his prestige, to seek greatness, to dominate in a crisis. And the manuscript that he wrote in the '20s for Pétain, which became *La France et son armée*, is far more than a history of the French army; it is again a study of the army's relation to the varying skills of the political leaders of the nation.

But the main part of the answer lies much deeper, in de Gaulle's imagination. From early on, he wanted to be the potential savior of his beloved France, whose history and culture had been carefully transmitted to him by his father. When he was 15, in 1905, he wrote an essay that began: "In 1930, Europe, irritated by the ill will and insolence of the government, declared war on France." This was followed by a recreation of what happened to Napoleon in 1814, but this time the invaders are Germans, the "sovereigns meeting in Vienna" stay neutral, and "General de Gaulle" is put in charge of the larger of two French armies. The unfinished piece provides a minute description of battles and losses, and throughout them all "General de Gaulle" is the master of strategy, knowing when to drop plans and take risks.

De Gaulle's conviction that life is worth living only if one accomplishes great deeds—only if one rises above what he would call *le terre-à-terre* (remember, he was inordinately tall) and for a great cause—came early. He once teased an admiring interviewer who asked him why he decided, all alone, to resist in June 1940, by answering, "I was politically ambitious"—a characteristically tart reply that scraped away the layer of theater that he deemed necessary for public leadership, yet reduced to ordinary ambition what was obviously a lifelong fire, a yearning that his gifts allowed him to fulfill in not just one way, but two: in action and in writing.

CHARLES DE GAULLE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

What ideological training did de Gaulle receive? His father was clearly no admirer of the French Revolution and of the parliamentary regime; his comments on the manuscript of *La France et son armée* are revealing about his hostility to the Jacobin leaders of 1792-94. Still, he did not join the anti-Dreyfus camp, and his son, while often contemptuous of parliamentary interference, in his letters from the front, never seems to have questioned the legitimacy of the Republic that the French had chosen after 1871. Whatever regime served the national interest and had the assent of the people was, in de Gaulle's view, the right one.

That is why he never fell under the spell of Charles Maurras and his *Action française*. Maurras's nationalism was never like de Gaulle's; the latter's was inclusive (*rassembler*, rallying, was always a key word), whereas Maurras wanted to destroy the Republic (*la gueuse*, the slut) and to exclude Jews, Freemasons, Protestants, and foreigners. One of de Gaulle's mentors in the 1920s and 1930s was Colonel Emile Mayer, a Jew; and when de Gaulle, in the 1930s, began to seek support among intellectuals and politicians for his ideas of military reform, he turned to the Christian Democrats of Témoignage Chrétien, not to the extreme right.

In *La France et son armée*, he praised the Committee of Public Safety for having organized the defense of France during the Revolution. This ideological ecumenism served him well as a leader in exile. Unlike many of his compatriots, he carefully defended the "Franco-Russian pact" in a letter written in December 1936 to his mother, who was no sympathizer of Leon Blum and the Popular Front. War is coming, he wrote, Italy will kick France in the rear (at that time the right was calling on France to drop the agreement with Moscow and turn to Mussolini). "We must survive, and all the rest is literature. . . . Everything that can help us against Germany is good to use, even Russian military forces."

Lacouture casts light on the troublesome matter of de Gaulle's long relationship with Pétain, and its acrimonious end, which was caused by de Gaulle's determination to publish under his own name the manuscript for *La France et son armée*, which Pétain had commissioned in 1925 but buried in a drawer. Lacouture shows that the admiration of the younger man for the older one was never cloudless. After the war, when he was one of Pétain's protégés, he never endorsed the older man's cult of the defensive, and above all he was shocked by Pétain's willingness, in 1925, to replace Marshal Hubert Lyautey, who was fired by the government from his post as French

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commander in Morocco, where he had failed to put down an insurrection. Later he often said that Pétain died in 1925.

Pétain was exceptionally tolerant of de Gaulle's prickly pride and his sensitivity to slights, but in the final "battle" over the book in 1938 neither side behaved with much grace. Yet, as Lacouture shows, it was more than a battle of egos. Pétain and his aides' editorial changes on the original manuscript made it much more banal, and de Gaulle rejected them. One of the abridgements in the American edition of Lacouture's biography deprives us of a telling example: de Gaulle, writing about the generals of the Revolution, deplored that political frenzy had deprived them of "their prestige, often of their life, sometimes of their honor." Pétain, in his correction, put honor before life. De Gaulle replied "acidly": it is a gradation, and he "half underlined" honor.

De Gaulle served for almost two years, between 1929 and 1931, in Lebanon, where France had obtained a mandate from the League of Nations, and his Lebanese experience explains some of the riddle of the later, the "second," de Gaulle, the decolonizer of the '60s. His letters from Beirut show an inclination toward firmness and a pessimism about the long-term chances of French rule. This ambivalence about the empire appeared again during the war years. After all, it was the portion of the empire that rallied to de Gaulle in exile that provided him with a basis of power and legitimacy.

He seems to have understood, here as elsewhere, that things would never again be as they had been, but he does not seem to have grasped the depth of anticolonial feelings in many of the educated "natives," especially in North Africa. He was, above all, deeply suspicious of British plots against France in the Levant and Madagascar, and of American plans in North Africa and intrigues about Indochina; and he was determined, therefore, to control the evolution that he deemed inevitable (yet whose speed and trajectory he misjudged), or to restore French rule where it had disappeared (Indochina) as the necessary prerequisite to a satisfactory evolution. Later the Gaullists would make the Brazzavile Conference of early 1944 the symbol, and the first stage, of de Gaulle's decolonization, but in fact it was a far more timid and vague affair. De Gaulle's liberalism was, at best and at most, deferred for a distant future. In the present, priority was given to control, and, if necessary, to repression, as in the Levant. His willingness to accommodate nationalism in Indochina, as he seemed to signal at the end of 1943, slackened after the Japanese seized power from the French in March 1945.

The most complicated of the issues related to de Gaulle's actions in wartime, of course, concern his relations with the Resistance movements and the metropolitan parties. Two puzzles are particularly important. The first is his decision to give to the parties, most of which had been discredited by their behavior at the time of France's fall and by their initial support of Pétain, seats on the National Council of the Resistance that his emissary to France, the heroic Jean Moulin, was instructed to establish. Many of the leaders of the Resistance, who despised the pre-war parties, were furious. Several of de Gaulle's closest aides, such as the Socialist Pierre Brossolette and Colonel Passy (the pseudonym of André Dewavrin), the head of Free France's intelligence service, also disapproved. This led to violent tension between Moulin and Brossolette (who were both doomed to die soon in the service of France).

De Gaulle never cared much for France's parties. Lacouture explains why he chose nevertheless to "revive" them. The Communist Party had already been revived, by the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and by its mobilization against the Nazi occupation of France and against Vichy. De Gaulle, under advice

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from Socialists more "orthodox" than Brossolette, and especially from the Socialist leader Leon Blum, who was jailed by Vichy, decided that his legitimacy in France, and his ultimate control over the Communists, required the support and the formal recognition of the other parties, especially the Socialist Party. Moreover, he had had trouble imposing his authority on the Resistance movements: many of their leaders felt that they owed him nothing, that *they* were the fighting France. The parties (other than the Communists) would owe him, by contrast, a great deal, and in that way he could remain the master of the balance of power.

If he was sufficiently Machiavellian to calculate politically in a way that seemed outrageous to Brossolette and to many leaders of the Resistance, why did he not choose also to encourage the non-Communist Resistance movements to merge, perhaps with the Socialists, to form the kind of Laborite Rally that Brossolette was calling for, and to become its leader, thus giving himself a solid political base in liberated France? Instead, when he returned to France as the symbol of national unity, he found himself at odds with the despised parties, the Resistance movements melted away (most of their members chose among the parties), and he was left without any base at all.

The "orthodox" answer is that de Gaulle wanted to be the unifier, the man who (as he later said) belonged to all and to none. But there are other answers. At one level, he understood that the "Resistance rally" would not be "above parties," especially as the Communists had no intention of losing their autonomy. It would be, instead, just one more party, and he did not want to appear as a partisan. At a deeper level, his relations with the delegates of the parties and the Resistance movements who had come to him in London and Algiers were always difficult; he was impatient with their politicking, and they found him cold, distant, and inhuman. It was not an experience that he wanted to perpetuate.

De Gaulle overestimated the extent to which he would remain indispensable as a symbol. By the end of 1945, the parties, old (Communist and Socialist) and new (Christian Democrats), were ready to govern without him. He resigned in January 1946, in the expectation that he would be called back by popular demand. He wasn't. It was only then—and too late—that he decided to give himself a political base and found a Rally "above" the parties. And, irony of ironies, his wartime reservations proved correct: his creation did quickly become just one more party—inevitably, on the right—and he appeared as a rather savage partisan. After that experiment failed, and he retired again, de Gaulle finally came up with the solution to the puzzle. When he returned to power in 1958, he squared the circle: he remained overtly "above" all parties, the president of all the French, but he let his associates from the defunct Rally set up a party that was its successor, and that party provided him with the base he needed to govern, without being its formal head at all.

The General who received the "consecration" of a delirious Paris at the end of 1944 was a very different man from the president of the Fifth Republic. The wartime de Gaulle—one can see it in all the photographs—is like a flayed man: somber, unsmiling, stark, awkward, on his guard against betrayals and intrigues, carrying on his shoulders the weight of France's destiny and concerned only with France's fate. In the newsreels, one doesn't see him smiling, however thinly, until the liberation of Paris. Late in his life, he inscribed two proverbs in a copy of his *War Memoirs*, one Greek and the other medieval, both meaning: "It is by suffering that we learn."

From 1916 until 1958—indeed, until 1962, when the Algerian war ended—de Gaulle suffered far more than he ever enjoyed himself. (In this respect, he could not have been more unlike Churchill.) Wounded and captured in 1916, he "missed" half of the First World War. In the '20s and '30s his instincts about command, and later his own doctrines, were disregarded, with disastrous (and fully anticipated) consequences. After 1928 he took the most attentive and touching care of his retarded daughter, Anne (she died in 1948). After his resignation in 1946, his self-fulfilling prophetic thunderbolts hurled at the Fourth Republic revealed enormous depths of anger and frustration. It is only in the Fifth Republic that the French (and among foreign leaders, Adenauer most clearly) saw a different de Gaulle: debonair, benign, humorous (not in his old, cutting way), at ease in his expanded body, broader and more farsighted, regal and mischievous.

It was a side of the man that came out only with age and final success. But those who had seen him in his family knew that this tormented and worried man, who clearly had deep doubts in times of crisis about his ability to accomplish his mission as the self-appointed savior of his people, was, at Colombey, a serene, affectionate, conventional man, who gladly practiced the bourgeois rituals of family life, including "extreme reticence about money" and a fondness for "vulgar dishes."

III.

De Gaulle's relations with the United States have always intrigued commentators. Was the frequently fierce hostility to America that he dis-

Garbo

Her eyes never blink—
higher beings do not blink,

nor people in remote lands
who stare at you from the fields—
but that's innocence, like animals.

If blinking is a kind of flinching,
she never flinches.
She doesn't adopt any facial expression—
it's her feelings she shows
or none at all. Nor does she put on
cute mannerisms like we do, meaning
we're desperate for attention.
If she says she wants to be alone
she's the only one we believe it of.

It's no devices then that make her beautiful
but the lack of them. Still, the awkwardness
of her grace shows that being graceful
is not an easy victory—
there's the permanent mournfulness in
the mouth
and the testimony of those eyes—
no blinking it back,
it's all there.

Can't we make the same commitment,
risk shedding evasions, devices, defences
—in short, our faces—
and look unblinking at each other,
vulnerable
to what in our hearts we long for,
whatever the cost, wherever it leads?
Or does she affirm that for mere mortals
the price is too great,

though for herself
she could not, would not, choose another
fate.

Edward Field

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played during the Fifth Republic owed to preconceived ideas, or to the way in which he had been treated by Roosevelt during the war? Lacouture's extensive research and scrupulously fair account comes to two conclusions. The first is that de Gaulle started without anti-American prejudices. As a herald of armored warfare, he had considerable respect for America's industrial capabilities (at a time when many French conservatives were denouncing modern technology and American capitalism as the death of the spirit). One could add, as Blanc does in his book, that de Gaulle, who held very sharp images of nations like Germany and England, had something close to a mental blank when it came to the quasi-continent between two oceans, with its abbreviated history.

Lacouture's second conclusion is that the shabby treatment of de Gaulle by Roosevelt, which he analyzes in detail, and which he attributes in large part to the influence of American and French advisers, remains mysterious. One can find rationalizations, as did the historian William Langer in his apologia, *Our Vichy Gamble* (1947). Langer argued that it had been important for Washington to be present in Vichy trying to influence Pétain against concessions to Germany, especially concerning the French fleet and colonies; and he thought that this attempt had achieved worthwhile results. But the American policy of support for Pétain's regime was morally wrong, politically inept, and ultimately counterproductive. It neither stopped nor deterred de Gaulle; it neither noted nor drew the consequences of the massive swing of French public opinion in occupied France toward de Gaulle; and it left a legacy of suspicion. The remarkable thing is that de Gaulle—who remained firm in his conviction that statesmen are moved by cold calculations of power, not by the bonds that sweeten private life—kept his admiration for Roosevelt, and his sympathy for men like Eisenhower, who had understood him and respected him.

The tension between de Gaulle and the United States was mutual, of course. There are many reasons why Americans—and not only American policymakers—found it difficult to "warm up" to de Gaulle and to recognize his greatness. He was simply not the kind of leader that Americans admire.

There was, for a start, his style of authority. It was a mix of elements none of which Americans like. The lifelong student of French history adopted and adapted a majestic and ritualistic code of behavior that seemed to flow directly from France's prerevolutionary monarchy. It was not quite rule by divine right, but he often referred to the legitimacy conferred on him by history. And he resorted to referenda that reminded even his friends of Bonapartist plebiscites, and of the Napoleonic conviction that leadership comes from above, support comes from below, and parliamentary intermediaries are nuisances. And there was a large Rousseauistic component: the conviction that there lies dormant in *la France profonde* a general will superior to, and hidden by, private interests and public factions, and which it is the mission of the leader to call to the fore.

None of these ingredients comport comfortably with American democracy. Still, de Gaulle was a democrat—a reluctant democrat, perhaps—who believed that popular consent was a necessary precondition for sustained action. In each of the referenda, he (unlike his successors) put his power at stake, and he resigned, as he warned that he would, when he lost in 1969, exactly as he had resigned in 1946. His criticisms of French parties and parliamentarism, whose flaws had severely impaired the nation's ability to act decisively, were not unjustified. The real flaw in de Gaulle's style, as Raymond Aron put it during the crisis of May 1968, was his elimination of almost all the safety valves: all that remained for the aggrieved citizenry were street protests and strikes.

Yet de Gaulle grasped that democracy today needs more than a bond of trust between leader and led, more than classical parliamentary representation. It was this strong feeling that led to his unsuccessful but shrewd groping for decentralization and "participation," which was hard to reconcile, of course, with his conception of a strong executive in a strong state. The charge of Bonapartism always overlooked his respect for public liberties (except when it came to the control of television!), as well as his decision to preserve, in the constitutional system of the Fifth Republic, an important parliamentary component, with a Cabinet as responsible to the National Assembly as he was to the national electorate.

Then there was his nationalism. Americans like reluctant national liberators à la Washington. They don't consider themselves nationalists, they prefer "pragmatic" leaders to dogmatic ones, and they saw de Gaulle as a dogmatic nationalist. This was a doubly bad mark: first, how could a man dream (in Theodore Sorensen's words) of restoring greatness to a country the size of Texas, and second, didn't he realize that the traditional nation-state was obsolete? In reality, de Gaulle believed that we live more than ever in the age of nation-states, whose right to self-determination he later came to promote. But he believed no less firmly that these entities must cooperate in order to achieve national goals and the common good. Protecting France's autonomy of decision was one of the very few dogmas of this champion of *les circonstances*. Still, as he explained to Adenauer, he grasped that France's days as a superpower were gone, that for France an organized Western Europe was imperative, that his mission was to cure the French of their nostalgia and to inspire them with the sense that being a middle-size power did not mean mediocrity and decline.

A third reason why Americans have found de Gaulle's statecraft unpalatable was his conviction that such an adaptation to new realities, and a return to grandeur after the falls of 1940 and 1958, demanded a powerful state. In the delicate balance between state and society, Americans have always put more weight on society (and have always underesti-

Dietrich

She never had to make up
for not being popular at school—
she started out well beyond all that.

She was never a bobbysoxer, for example,
nor one of those girls fighting
against going all the way—
you don't go from that to where she is.

When she sings *"My ideal is a big blond man"*
or *"Every night another bliss"*
you know just what she means by this.

Ancient in Paris,
perfect setting for monuments
where the boulevards culminate
in a granite bust,

where the populace adores
the will that invents
an inviolable mask—
still she writes "This rotten world,"

as if tied to a mast and forced
to witness, as she always has—
her eyes windows
with the shades permanently up.

Edward Field

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mated the role of the federal government in their own history, especially in this century). De Gaulle was always alive to the "ferments of division" in French society: class conflicts, interest group ambitions, partisan clashes, ideological civil wars, the legacy of a tumultuous history. It was this obsession that largely explains his otherwise almost inexplicable treatment of the French Resistance. He wanted its members to be soldiers for France's liberation; he worried about their putting partisan and ideological considerations first, about behaving like factions and thus losing sight of the need for unity in action. The Resistance movements did not understand why de Gaulle seemed to fight France's allies, as they knew little of Roosevelt's designs and of Churchill's choices. De Gaulle, in turn, had no patience for the politicking of the Resistance, which he deemed divisive, further proof of the need for a strong state.

What many Americans also disliked, when they did not find them absurd, were the rituals of Gaullism (which became formalized in the days of the Rally, after 1947, and in the Fifth Republic): the press conferences that were conferences to the press, the solemn speeches, the public rallies, the journeys through the country (and abroad), the heavy protocol, the punctilious emphasis on form rather than on substance. (After the Yalta conference, for example, to which he had not been invited, de Gaulle refused to meet Roosevelt in Algiers, because he did not wish to be summoned by a foreign leader to what was still a French city.) The content of a diplomatic proposal often seemed to matter less than its provenance: it was good when France proposed it, bad when the initiative came from elsewhere. All of this was a part, however, of a deliberate strategy. This close reader of Pascal knew that people's respect for institutions depends on ritual and make-believe, and that the image, in diplomacy, is an important part of reality. Prestige and reputation are more than the shadow of power, they are a portion of it.

And this brings us to de Gaulle's conception of international affairs. It was certainly not Wilsonian idealism, or the liberal vision of a gradual pacification of the world by means of international public opinion, a transnational network of interests, and a shrinking and taming of state power. It was much closer, instead, to the harsh realism of Thucydides or Rousseau. States have no friends, only interests. War is always a possibility. Economic interdependence (which de Gaulle acknowledged) and trade breed competition and a struggle for advantage, along with a need to cooperate. There is no substitute for the balance of power. There is no automatic harmony among nation-states, though the spirit of the age requires that states be national. And international institutions are either arenas for state maneuvers or else traps in which important states risk losing control to gatherings of Lilliputians or to *apatride*, or denationalized, bureaucrats.

This stark view offended the liberal internationalism of the American foreign policy establishment, and de Gaulle added insult to injury when he suggested that its faith was itself a splendid cloak for American hegemonic impulses. American officials preferred the vision of Jean Monnet (who had not chosen to follow de Gaulle in the fateful summer of 1940), a vision in which the nation-state was obsolete, and would be overcome, piece by piece, through the functional cooperation of interest groups and parties across borders under the leadership of wise civil servants defining and enforcing the common good.

For de Gaulle, as for Margaret Thatcher today, such an approach was an insidious attack not only on state sovereignty, but also on democratic responsibility. Unlike Thatcher, he wanted an organized Europe that could emancipate itself from its American guardian. Such a Europe had to be the work, however, of those who were responsible to their electorates, of the national statesmen, and it had to aim for clear goals instead of relying on the sly logic of ever-expanding functional needs for joint action. Today's European Community is an improbable—yet not ineffectual—blend of de Gaulle and Monnet.

De Gaulle's desire for a solid Western European entity clashed, of course, with his attachment to "free hands for France." But both were the consequence of his passion for history. It was history that had produced, over the centuries, a French nation and state, whereas history had produced no European nation; and it was history that made a "Europe of states" the diplomatic center of the world. Americans, as Tocqueville had understood, project themselves into the future. For them, the past is generally a burden to be shed, a springboard; and insofar as it is a legacy, it is often a yoke. They found it difficult to sympathize, therefore, with a leader who identified himself completely with France, who seemed to commune with the totality of French history, transcending its rifts, seeing them, as de Gaulle wrote at the beginning of his *War Memoirs*, as reasons for regret, but without rejecting any of the traditions in conflict. There was, at the core of de Gaulle's being, beneath the realism, the maneuvering, the cunning, the toughness, the slashing humor, an element of mysticism that Americans did not appreciate.

He had chosen to serve France, and France would reward him with a role commensurate to his ardor. France, as he said in 1965, was neither the right nor the left, nor "the French of the moment": it was both order and progress, and it embraced "all the generations" of the French. It was this sense of responsibility to France's past as well as future that led him, in 1967, to try in his way to repay France's debt to the French Canadians, abandoned two centuries earlier—in a gesture Americans (and British Canadians) deemed scandalous, and that was certainly not undertaken for reasons of personal advantage, for he had nothing to gain by calling for a free Quebec. Americans always suspected, like Roosevelt, that he was just an "egoist," concerned only with his own self-aggrandizement. His identification with France was, to be sure, a way of rising above the ordinary folk, but it was also a formidable way of harnessing an overpowering ego.

At the end, one always returns to the fascination of a personality that, like Napoleon's, is *hors du commun*. But Napoleon was the child of Machiavelli's Prince. De Gaulle, by contrast, cannot be understood if one does not know the whole range of French cultural references that he embodied, evoked, and exploited. They are particularly apparent in his books and his speeches, which are written in a style that is immediately recognizable as de Gaulle's own: the mix of archaic language and familiar argot; the concern with heroic leadership in which a man chooses grandeur, as in Corneille; the statecraft that resembles Richelieu and the religious faith—ardent, personal, and pessimistic—that reminds one of Pascal.

But alongside the classical echoes that the French first hear in school and that inform de Gaulle's sweeping Bossuet-like cadences, there are also the Romantic organ sounds of Chateaubriand's prose and Hugo's *démesure*, the wistful music of Barrès, the populist and individualistic, Catholic and nationalist tone of Péguy. De Gaulle was steeped in literature and history, not in music or painting; and French culture, as it was traditionally inculcated into the French, has always been literary above all. His ability to play on all those literary registers, to seduce both Mauriac and Malraux, to appreciate Piaf and Bardot as well as Nietzsche and Shakespeare, explains much of the hold

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that he has had on the imagination of the French. De Gaulle in English sounds pompous or awkward, but his eloquence and pungent choice of words make him a great writer of French; and he owed much of his authority to his mastery of language.

It is unfortunate that Lacouture's American publisher has decided to condense his three volumes into two, which means that the second and third volumes, dealing with de Gaulle from the liberation of France in 1944 to his death, will have to be reduced to one. That amounts to a real mutilation of a work that owes much of its importance to its wealth of significant detail and its skillful account of the political and cultural background. Still, Lacouture, who protests against the planned condensation in a crisp prefatory note, considers that the cuts in the first volume "disturb neither the balance nor the spirit of the original."

Happily, this is true. Lacouture's book, competently translated by Patrick O'Brian, may go a long way toward closing the gap that has existed since 1940—a gap that formed not only between American officials and de Gaulle, but between America and France. For even when it rejected de Gaulle's priorities or his leadership, France was never entirely deaf to his appeals, his reproaches, his inspirations.

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The Art of Absence

BY SVEN BIRKERTS

The Continuous Life by Mark Strand

(Knopf, 63 pp., $18.95)

Selected Poems by Mark Strand

(Knopf, 152 pp., $10.95 paper)

In an essay titled "Hopper: The Loneliness Factor," Mark Strand (who once studied to be a painter) submits several of Edward Hopper's canvases to a searching formal analysis and locates what he believes to be the source of their unsettling power. The artist, he finds, constructed many of his paintings around the dominant shape of an isosceles trapezoid, thus introducing a "nonexistent vanishing point." The works refuse, that is, to resolve their tensions within their own perimeters; the viewer can enter, but cannot settle.

That Strand should have chosen Hopper for a subject is fitting. He, too, creates at the core of his poetry a disquiet that is somehow more profound than what the lines themselves seem to warrant. It is an effect that deepens as one reads through the oeuvre, until it becomes unbearable and the poems must be set aside. And yet the source of the unease—the vanishing point, if you will—is impossible to pin down; it is off the page. The New Critics, with their insistence on the independent, artifact quality of the finished poem, would have deemed such an observation heretical; but I would be fascinated to read a New Critical explication of this man's work.

Over the past three decades Strand has perfected a chill-inducing poetry of nothingness. The poems are not about life—the inscrutable forward-moving, time-contending process—but about the emptying out of life. They are, taken together, a place of night sounds, where the wind keeps moving because it has no place to stop, and where the self thinks about itself thinking and finds that its thoughts, like the wind, have nothing to adhere to. This poet's art is to make an impression of nothing out of something, out of the ciphers and the signifiers of our shared reality. The making itself is so skillful that the words all but vanish into their signifying. In the wake of the reading, one feels that one has connected not with the poem, but with something anterior to its making—anterior, even, to its maker. The focus lies elsewhere and the elsewhere is nowhere. A vanishing act.

Strand, who is the Poet Laureate at the Library of Congress, is unique among poets in that he has not grown or changed very much over the course of his career. This is not a slight. The point is that his vision—a vision of how things are beyond or outside the clutter of self-making—is not the sort that admits of great modification. In Strand, nothingness and absence are termini, not points of origin. The poet's ongoing preoccupation has resulted in a deepening through reiteration. His *Selected Poems*, which includes work from 1964 to 1980, shows how change and development are severely constrained by the nature of the vision, but his new collection, *The Continuous Life*, his first in a decade, suggests that his attitude may be evolving toward accommodation.

In attempting to isolate Strand's distinctive approach, one could do worse than cite the opening stanza of the well-known "Keeping Things Whole" from *Sleeping With One Eye Open* (1964):

> In a field
> I am the absence
> of field.
> This is
> always the case.
> Wherever I am
> I am what is missing.

While many of Strand's other poems have more specific (though still generic) settings, these lines distill his metaphysics, a kind of reversed Cartesianism wherein to be is not to be and thinking throws existing into question. The diction, here as elsewhere, is assertively neutral. The rhythms are even, unemphatic—anything more expressive would serve as a subliminal signal of the life force—and the main agency of formal control is the line break, which Strand deploys with a cool de Stijl composure.

Though they differ in their conceits and approaches, the poems of the first three books, including also *Reasons For Moving* (1968) and *Darker* (1970), are of a piece. The imaginings are nocturnal, and the visual alphabet, as here in "The Dress," is drawn from the place of dreams:

> Lie down on the bright hill
> with the moon's hand on your cheek,
> your flesh deep in the white folds of your dress,
> and you will not hear the passionate mole
> extending the length of his darkness,
> or the owl arranging all of the night,
> which is his wisdom, or the poem
> filling your pillow with its blue feathers.
> But if you step out of your dress and move into the shade,
> the mole will find you, so will the owl, and so will the poem,

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and you will fall into another darkness, one
you will find
yourself making and remaking until it is
perfect.

If this short poem, with its oneiric logic, its mysterious primal images, seems familiar, it is perhaps because the early Strand (along with the more folkloric Charles Simic) exerted a tremendous influence on younger poets during the 1970s and early 1980s. The Strand procedure became a full-blown strain in American poetry, which for a period was a dark and dreamy place populated with creatures of the night. There are surface similarities, moreover, with the so-called "deep image" poetry that Robert Bly was proselytizing at about the same time.

And yet the differences must be promptly underscored. In Bly's poetics, the deep images are the avenue to a psychic plenitude; in Strand, they are tokens of a force that cares nothing for us. His dark places are not hoards of ancient energies but terrifying zones abutting on the void. As Strand wrote in his early poem "Violent Storm": "Already now the lights / That shared our wakefulness are dimming / And the dark brushes against our eyes." No myths or imaginings are proof against the contact.

For Strand, it is thus: we have been hurled into being and there is no immanent or transcendent ground for the self. Yet we possess, in uneasy wakefulness, a capacity to perceive and to reflect. This is our curse, for it cuts us off from the serene unknowingness of the rest of the natural world. The traditional recourse has been religion—to believe that we are not held simply within ourselves, but, in some fashion, within the love (or purpose) of a higher being. But there is no hint of this in Strand, not anywhere. He has rigorously pruned from his lines anything that could suggest a telos, or a redemption of pain and isolation. His figures are at large in space; they move about in time—time afflicts them—but they never progress *to* anything.

As might be expected, where there is no higher power or entity, there will flourish the imagining of the Other—that neutral psychic echo that is the not-self. Strand's poetry posits this other at every turn. Indeed, it is a small step, if a step at all, from "Wherever I am / I am what is missing" to the querying in the last stanza of "My Life By Somebody Else":

Why do you never come? Must I have you by
being
somebody else? Must I write *My Life* by
somebody else?
My Death by somebody else? Are you
listening?
Somebody else has arrived. Somebody else
is writing.

With the publication in 1973 of *The Story of Our Lives*, Strand made what was for him a significant departure, leaving behind the short poems, so distinctive in their polished austerity, to explore the rhetorical and narrative possibilities of the long poem. The book opens with the powerful "Elegy for My Father," a poem in six sections. Strand's lines are loose, often repetitive, but they press at their subject with a mounting urgency. In the absence of any argument or metaphysics, the sheer perseverance of address is impressive. Strand succeeds by varying the pitch and approach, moving from the affectless pronouncements of the first section:

The hands were yours, the arms were yours,
But you were not there.
The eyes were yours, but they were closed
and would not open.

to a more urgent reimagining of the process of dying in section three:

You put your watch to your ear.
You felt yourself slipping.
You lay on the bed.
You folded your arms over your chest and
you dreamed of the world without you.

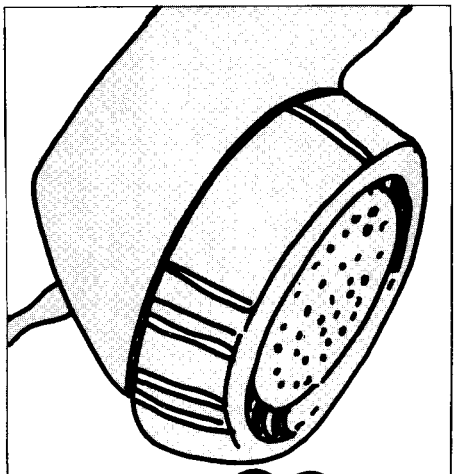
to the final section, which achieves an impersonal, even elemental perspective, integrating the loss into the rhythm of seasonal passage:

It is winter and the new year.
Nobody knows you.
Away from the stars, from the rain of light,
You lie under the weather of stones.

The elegy manifests rather overtly the influences of Spanish and South American poets. Strand freely adopts the surreal particularizations favored by Neruda and Vallejo ("The years, the hours, that would not find you / Turned in the wrists of other.") and the recursive repetitions of Carlos Drummond de Andrade, whom Strand has translated.

In this same collection we also find the long tour-de-force narratives "The Story of Our Lives" and "The Untelling," both of which pit narration against itself, showing how the memory tape can be played backward, undoing the causal chain until, as Eliot wrote, "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present." In Strand's version, the real and the possible commingle in the perpetual present of art. He ends "The Untelling," a sequence in which the speaker is a writer wrestling with what might be either a memory or an imagined event, by putting the tail inside the snake's mouth; the writer begins the poem that we have, presumably, been reading. We read:

He turned and walked to the house.
He went to the room
that looked out on the lawn.
He sat and began to write:
THE UNTELLING
To the Woman in the Yellow Dress



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While the conceit of these longer poems is interesting, the line-by-line progress is often tedious, without much to savor in the poetry itself.

Strand may have recognized the problematic aspects of narration (which are bound to be aggravated a hundredfold for a writer who cares little for telling). In any event, with *The Late Hour*, published in 1978, he returned to doing what he does best—the short, visually structured lyric. Where these efforts differ from his earlier work is in their greater preoccupation with his own native terrain (Strand was born on Prince Edward Island) and with childhood. To the bleak movement toward nothing that characterizes adulthood, he opposes the undivided time of childhood. He turns his staring eye upon the past and, as here in the final stanzas of "Where Are the Waters of Childhood?," works his way back past all ruin and change:

> Keep going back, back to the field, flat and sealed in mist.
> On the other side, a man and a woman are waiting;
> they have come back, your mother before she was gray,
> your father before he was white.
>
> Now look at the North West Arm, how it glows a deep cerulean blue.
> See the light on the grass, the one leaf burning, the cloud
> that flares. You're almost there, in a moment your parents
> will disappear, leaving you under the light of a vanished star,
> under the dark of a star newly born. Now is the time.
>
> Now you invent the boat of your flesh and set it upon the waters
> and drift in the gradual swell, in the laboring salt.
> Now you look down. The waters of childhood are there.

This retrogressive probing is no mere idiosyncrasy; it is a very natural compulsion in a man who faces a world that is without apparent purpose. Projecting any act or initiative forward into the future only bares its ultimate futility. Perhaps, then, there is some clue to be found in origins. But as "Where Are the Waters of Childhood?" suggests, this starting point, this original potency, remains a sealed enigma.

Reading Strand, we are apt to realize just how much most other poetry—most other writing—makes an assumption of a telos, is premised on a confidence in events tending toward meaningful ends. But in this poet's world, as in the worlds of Beckett and Kafka, there is no place to which movement leads, except extinction. We get, in the static *nature morte* compositions and the various untellings, a sense of the present that bears little relation to the present that most of us experience. It is a kind of duration grounded in nothingness.

Strand's new collection, *The Continuous Life*, is thus aptly titled. And the best poems in the book, like the lovely—and terrifying—"A.M.," express the familiar Strand recognitions with a classical rigor:

> Another day has come,
> Another fabulous escape from the damages of night,
> so even the gulls, in the ragged circle of their flight,
> Above the sea's long lanes that flash and fall, scream
> Their approval. How well the sun's rays probe
> The rotting carcass of a skate, how well
> They show the worms and swarming flies at work,
> How well they shine upon the fatal sprawl
> Of everything on earth. How well they love us all.

This is a passage that can stand side by side with the best of Baudelaire. In the final couplet a near-masochistic glee tinges the implicit neutrality of the high-altitude vantage. And while the poet has not changed his fundamental perception, there is a subtle new suggestion of openness. Ambiguous and stern as the final words are, they also make a place for the reader. The sheer beauty of the saying redeems some part of the dread.

Alas, too many of the other pieces in the book fall flat. Strand has a penchant, to me mysterious, for a self-conscious and silly kind of black humor, a penchant that finds it apotheosis in the 1985 prose collection *Mr. and Mrs. Baby*. In a lengthy piece titled "Translation," for example, Strand fills page after page with this sort of thing:

> I was in the bathtub when Jorge Luis Borges stumbled in the door. "Borges, be careful," I yelled. "The floor is slippery and you are blind." Then, soaping my chest, I said, "Borges, have you ever considered what is implicit in phrase like 'I translate Apollinaire into English' or 'I translate de la Mare into French' " . . .

But these worked-up whimsies and bits of ventriloquism are, mercifully, redeemed by a handful of poems that must be ranked with Strand's very finest. The reader who knows the work will remark a certain shift. While the void has by no means receded or become less voidlike, the poet's own angle of regard seems to have altered. The scenarios, as the passage from "A.M." might attest, are no longer calculated to be unsettling. Their enlarged—one might say Lucretian—perspective suggests a growing acceptance by the poet of what he perceives to be the nature of things.

In the poem "Fiction," to cite another instance, Strand projects himself as a God-like figure pondering the sealed fates of characters in novels, and then turns to consider the very different situation of the self in a Godless universe. As the final lines bring about a fusion of fiction and life, they also carry a hard-won note of solace:

> The war that raged for years will come to a close
> And so will everything else, except for a presence
> Hard to define, a trace, like the scent of grass
> After a night of rain or the remains of a voice
> That lets us know without spelling it out
> Not to despair; if the end is come, it too will pass.

Similar ambiguity flashes up at the end of "Always," which might stand as the signature poem of our laureate, a poet enraptured by the void but also, increasingly, by the plenum that insists on filling it:

> Always so late in the day
> In their rumpled clothes, sitting
> Around a table lit by a single bulb,
> The great forgetters were hard at work.
> They tilted their heads to one side, closing their eyes.
> Then a house disappeared, and a man in his yard
> With all his flowers in a row.
> The great forgetters wrinkled their brows.
> Then Florida went and San Francisco
> Where tugs and barges leave
> Small gleaming scars across the Bay.
> One of the great forgetters struck a match.
> Gone were the harps of beaded lights
> That vault the rivers of New York.
> Another filled his glass
> And that was it for crowds at evening
> Under sulphur yellow streetlamps coming on.
> And afterwards Bulgaria was gone, and then Japan.
> "Where will it stop?" one of them said.
> "Such difficult work, pursuing the fate
> Of everything known," said another.
> "Down to the last stone," said a third,
> "And only the cold zero of perfection
> Left for the imagination." And gone
> Were North and South America,
> And gone as well the moon.
> Another yawned, another gazed at the window:
> No grass, no trees . . .
> The blaze of promise everywhere.

SVEN BIRKERTS writes a monthly column on books for *Wigwag* magazine. He is the author of *The Electric Life: Essays on Modern Poetry* (Morrow).

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Resisting Doom

By Daniel Max

The Dead Girl by Melanie Thernstrom

(Simon and Schuster, 430 pp., $19.95)

The killing of a privileged white person makes front-page news in New York despite 2,000 murders a year in the city. Over successive days in 1984 a college friend of mine, a Harvard "coed" (a word only used by the tabloids in conjunction with rape or murder) became familiar to New York subway readers and even television watchers: she was murdered on a West Side rooftop soon after moving to Manhattan to study acting. Since then other violent crimes against the kind of people who aren't supposed to suffer such fates have quickly replaced her name in the public's memory—Jennifer Levin, the Bellevue doctor, the Central Park jogger, the ad executive on Jane Street, the tourist from Utah.

The media play on our fears in their approach to these newsworthy murders. They imply that we are all at risk, which in fact is far from true. A black man is twenty times more likely to be murdered than a white woman, who is twice as likely to commit suicide as die by someone else's hand. For a young woman of educated background, the figures are vastly more lopsided. What makes these stories grist for sentimental sensationalism is precisely their rarity.

The victim's friends, as I discovered when my friend was murdered, make a subtler mistake. They look at the event as fated. They begin to regard every detail of the life in light of its untimely and horrible ending. The disappointed way that my friend used to look up at me when I came into the library, hoping to see her ex-boyfriend at my side, means something different now. It has become contaminated by what Melanie Thernstrom acutely calls "the endless attempt to make sadness seductive."

To announce her opposition to this tendency, Thernstrom begins her powerful book about her own murdered friend defiantly, with an epigraph that she aims to confute: "A man who dies at 35 is, at every point in his life, a man who dies at 35." With its long diarylike remembrances, its record of girlish notes passed as if behind the teacher's back, and its casual memories of comings and goings, Thernstrom tries to forestall her friend's entry not just into oblivion, but also into caricature.

Always attentive to sweep and pace, Thernstrom accumulates a great deal of detail and disrupts her narrative frequently in order to restrain emotion. The straightforward facts are too seductively sad to be left alone: her best friend, Roberta "Bibi" Lee, disappeared in November 1984 while jogging with her boyfriend in the hills of Berkeley, where she was a student. Within days "the friends of Bibi" had banded together and started an immense search operation, sending out thousands of leaflets, making hundreds of telephone calls. Many sightings were reported.

After five weeks a new search of the jogging area unearthed her body. She had been dead all along, killed with blows from a heavy rock, then raped. Her assailant had covered her with leaves and gravel; by the time she was found, animals had gnawed away enough of her that dental records were required for identification. Her boyfriend, Bradley Page, was taken to the police station for questioning and confessed, then recanted. A first trial acquitted him of murder and hung on a manslaughter charge, a second convicted him. Four years later he was free, pending appeal.

There are excellent ingredients for a crime book here, had Thernstrom wished to write one, complete with a creepy boyfriend who helped lead the rescue operation, even published a poem about how much he missed his girlfriend, and who spent the weeks after the killing sitting next to the author in the "Friends of Bibi" offices. But a true crime novel presupposes intimacy with the criminal. It would require knowledge of Brad's motives and emotions. Moreover, observing the conventions of the true crime genre means crediting the killer with having determined and validated the victim's life: without me, you are nothing. So Thernstrom avoids Brad in her book, much as she avoided him in life.

Thernstrom takes real care in constructing a verbal memorial, the work she writes so that Bibi "will be remembered forever." She warns herself: "People will cry for the girl if you tell it well . . . [but] your friend is what's forgotten among the glamour of symbolism, the pose of the photo, the closure of narrative." The result is alternately moving and difficult, an anti-true crime story anchored not in "prescient details but little things." Lovely word portraits of Bibi alternate with long pieces of trial testimony. Fictitious letters (Lee's family objected to using real ones, viewing Thernstrom's project as more media exploitation) trade off with tabloid clips.

But purity, given the story's natural tendency to crystallize into portents and symbols, is nearly impossible. The power of the narrative comes from Thernstrom's struggle to fend off what the reader can't help wanting to watch unfold: the ill-fated end of a life. In one section set in high school, Thernstrom starts out with mundane details of adolescent life: Bibi has just had a fight with her mother, in which she is shown to be a petty and irritable daughter. Paragraphs later Thernstrom is sitting with the Lees in their kitchen trying to make sense of the news that Bibi has disappeared. Then another memory surfaces: of a time earlier in college when Roberta came home and met one of Thernstrom's new college friends, Bob, whom she immediately liked. Here Thernstrom lets down her defense against her knowledge of the future: "Bob now knows Roberta. He is not one of the people who did not know Roberta. . . . If we hadn't gone for coffee that day, he would be." In truth, the reader has long since defied Thernstrom and succumbed to the seepage of melodrama into the story, to wonder at the last moments of a life that was about to end.

Thernstrom also writes a great deal about herself, again balancing between a sense that her world has been transformed by Bibi's murder and a desire to emphasize that mundane life goes on as before. She has learned that death can strike anywhere. "I wonder if I'll ever check out enough places to feel completely safe again, or whether complete safety, like complete happiness . . . is a childish concept: one grown-ups learned long ago to live without." Meanwhile she works hard to show her foibles, vulnerabilities that have little or nothing to do with Bibi. Thernstrom's attempted suicide after her boyfriend broke up with her, her quarrels with her mother, her embattled relations with the other searchers all reflect an ambivalence about her role in the narrative—an ambivalence she sees clearly. Her strategy is

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a good one: she hopes that if the narrator is not seductive the story won't be either.

But the book is a testament to the magnetic power of death, and Thernstrom's exceptional sensitivity qualifies her as an ideal guide through the darkness. Violence and murder crowd their way into her pages. People are always telling Thernstrom about other murders. Kidnappings are recounted. Even the murder of my friend (who was also a friend of Thernstrom's) on that Manhattan rooftop is woven into the story. And there is a presiding deity in this world, a Dickensian character named Lena Grady. She enters these comfortable and safe student lives from the strange subculture of missing persons operations. A "professional" volunteer searcher for people who have disappeared, she describes herself as *the* "person in California who knows how to run a recovery operation." Grady takes over the search, and with a therapist's false intimacy immediately starts calling Roberta, whom she never met, "Bibi," and the author, whom she hardly knows, "Mels."

"She is there when I come in the morning and there when I leave at the end of the day," Thernstrom writes, and when she calls at 5 a.m., Grady immediately picks up the phone. She is half-godsend and half-ghoul, conducting an expert search—reportedly the largest in California since the disappearance of Patty Hearst—all the time keeping the minds of her "students" on the horror of what has most likely happened. "The police don't really care, you know," she reports. "We are the ones who can find Bibi." Bibi's friends abhor and worship Grady, whose vision speaks to their fears and whose expertise tempts their hopes. She insists that Bibi is almost certainly dead already. At the same time, she is the only one who knows what to do next, who has a chance of finding Bibi alive. Even Bibi's parents, who shun the students whom they believe led their daughter astray, rely on Grady.

Grady's explanation of her livelihood—or obsession, since she does not seem to be paid—is that her son's own girlfriend was kidnapped and murdered, though it's not clear this is true. "They kept her alive for three days . . . . Melanie, *the things they did to her body*! . . . And such a sweet and innocent girl . . . You know the type—the type these things happen to—*the type Bibi must have been*—the type you are." Thernstrom is repulsed by Grady's melodramatic vision, by her thorough immersion in a haunted world, but she cannot tear herself from the bad news. And in the end, crazy or not, Grady is right. Her handpicked dogs cover the same ground as the police but find what the police dogs missed. The body lies just off the jogging trail. Reluctant to let go of such an impressionable mind, Grady convinces Thernstrom to take a special tour of the murder site.

Thernstrom knows she has ventured onto terrain where imagination threatens to usurp reality, where tragic stories edge out merely unlucky events. The media, too, know how alluring the terrain is, which has helped skew any clear sense of how much crime against the well-educated young there actually is. College murder victims make good copy. Often there is rape as well, which adds the requisite low interest to the high tragedy. Roberta Lee's sex life became as widely known as a rock star's, as did the Central Park jogger's.

Hard statistics, however, lag behind the lurid fears. Except in a handful of states, there are no figures on campus murder or, in fact, on campus crime of any kind. But in 1988 Denise Kalette of *USA Today* used hand-culled statistics from 700 schools to determine rates of crime on campus. The results were unsettling enough to be cited in current efforts to pass a conference bill requiring colleges to collate and report crime rates. But murder, the numbers showed, was a rarity. Despite 21,000 armed robberies, assaults, and rapes a year, there are only around thirty-five murders annually in or around college campuses of or by college-associated individuals. Out of a total of 48,000 homicides a year, such a number, while unfortunate, is extremely modest, given that there are 3,400 college campuses.

Melanie Thernstrom's very personal book in fact indirectly offers a useful public lesson: the seduction of sadness easily translates into the seduction of fear. The tragic perspective is always tempting, but it can also delude us with the illusion of control: if only we had fortified ourselves against the risks. . . . Perhaps the message of a story like Bibi's, if there is one, is that ill-luck can strike, whatever our fears and our efforts to hedge against them—a lesson that the privileged would like to forget. "I don't think she was doomed," Thernstrom writes of her friend near the end. "I think she died. Doomed is what characters are."

DANIEL MAX is a contributing editor to the *Paris Review.*

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

healthy human state. That's why business has launched its own "corporate wellness" crusade, which recognizes that the medical establishment knows little of health promotion.

In Peretz's case, he would serve humanity well by applying his considerable intelligence and insight to a greater examination of why people of healthy mind seek community. As a starting clue, recall that the soul naturally wants to "commune" with its Creator.

DAVID RESNICK
Los Angeles, California

Aesthetically correct

To the editors:

In "The Avant-Garde and Shock Art" (November 19), Robert Brustein writes

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that "the sociologist Daniel Bell has for years been calling modern art an anti-social, anti-democratic expression." Brustein is sloppy, and wrong. "Modern art," "anti-social," "anti-democratic"—what do these mean? I have never used those sweeping terms. In my *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, I said, as has Octavio Paz in *Children of the Mire*, that modernism, as a historical current, has been exhausted and that art, for example, has been taken over by the culturati, and become a commodity in the auction houses, while young radicals think they are shocking (who—the bourgeoisie?) with graffiti and conceptual statements. In the theater, directors assume the power of the authors and repeat the japes, once interesting, of an Artaud, a Piscator, a Vakhtanogov, and other experimenters of the 1920s and 1930s.

Repetition repeated loudly is not "exploration of the boundaries of what is known . . . extending human consciousness," whatever that means. The fundamental issue is not "exploration" (how far can one go beyond Baudelaire?) but stating the grounds of judgment. I have never said modern art is "anti-democratic" because democracy is not a criterion of judgment. Brustein has rarely stated his grounds of judgment, other than to repeat that word "experiment." Are all experiments good, true, and beautiful? How would he know?

DANIEL BELL
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Robert Brustein replies:

My reference point was not Mr. Bell's *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* but a more recent essay called "The Contradictions of Modernity and Modernism." "Anti-social" was a shorthand way of describing his statement that "the ego/self [of the modern artist] takes the throne as the center of the moral universe, making itself the arbiter of all decisions." "Anti-democratic" referred to his observation that the modern artist refuses to draw on the political-ethical traditions of the liberal-democratic West. Of course, not all experiment is "good, etc." My review severely criticized one of the examples. But the freedom to experiment must be preserved. That the "culturati" have taken it over is a sociological issue, not an aesthetic one. American artists (at times inanely political themselves) are now being besieged on all sides, substituting for the subversives lost to glasnost. Men of goodwill like Bell should be coming to their defense, not supporting their Puritan detractors. It doesn't help that his aesthetic is stuck in the '20s and '30s. Piscator, Artaud, and Vakhtanogov were attacked in much the same way in their time by much the same kinds of cultural conservatives. ●

TRB *continued from page 4*

without much trouble they could come up with a recipe for raising and spending government money that was both more progressive and better for economic growth than what we have now. The main problem is that neither side will take on the large chunk of the budget (approaching half) that simply amounts to writing checks to the middle class.

The latest conservative device for avoiding reality is something called "the Four Percent Solution." Invented at the Heritage Foundation and endorsed self-righteously by dozens of Republican members of Congress, it purports to show that if those liberal big spenders could just hold themselves to a 4 percent increase each year, the budget could be balanced with—yes—NO NEW TAXES, even the ones already enacted.

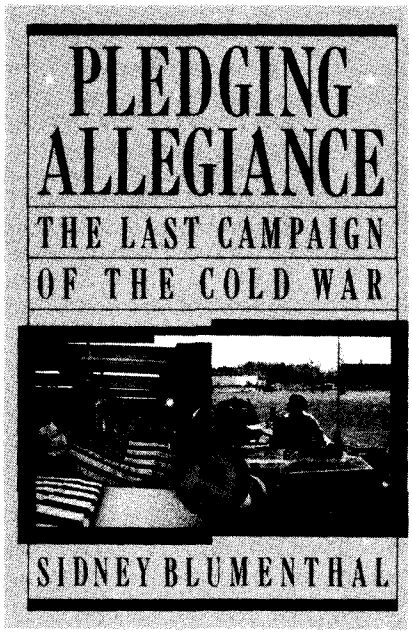
It sounds painless, as intended. And the math is sound. Revenues increase with inflation and economic growth (if any). Restrict rises in spending and you're home free. Of course the cost of providing services also increases with inflation (or, in the case of health care, faster than inflation). And an aging population means that more people each year are entitled to Social Security and Medicare. And you can't very well restrict interest payments on the national debt.

So holding increases in government spending to 4 percent would require real cuts that the four percenters lack the guts to propose directly. In the small print, the Heritage broadside notes that its 4 percent goal could be met, at least the first year, by allowing full increases in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and interest on the debt, while holding all other spending flat. It doesn't note that five years of this would mean something like a one-fifth cut in the rest of the government in real terms.

Another Heritage broadside lists some of the less-than-vital spending that survived the supposedly arduous budget negotiations: $50,000 for seedless grape research, $15 million for a children's museum, and so on. No doubt there is a lot of silly stuff still going on, though it's worth asking why the richest nation on earth must have an utterly no-frills government budget and can't afford a children's museum if it wants one. In any event, you can't squeeze serious savings out of seedless grapes and the like. But now this bluff need not be called. Like President Bush, the Heritage Foundation can thank the hated budget deal. It's made the world safe for another few years of conservative hypocrisy.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

"Beautifully done, ironic, learned, and with a strong argument."—Paul M. Kennedy, Dilworth Professor of History, Yale University



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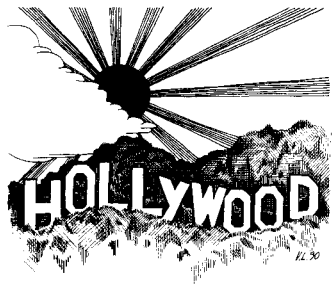
LOS ANGELES DIARIST

No Bonos

EVERY DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI MOVIE these days seems to begin with a swooping camera eye that descends from the sky into some fantasy of Los Angeles. This cinematic cliché is eerily close to the actual experience of flying into LAX. Through the frame of the plane window, one glimpses a thick, gray layer of smog hovering above an endless desolate landscape of tract houses and highways—paradise in decay. Ronald Reagan, who is chauffeured nearly every day from his home in Bel Air to his Beverly Hills office in Century City, used to say he wished he could take a Soviet leader up above Los Angeles in a helicopter to show him how luxuriously American workers really live. This anecdote operates at several levels, one of them being the sensibility of a Warner Bros. contract player of the 1940s whose mind was deeply grooved by certain repetitious plot lines. Reagan's wish was not a treatment, but a scene in a larger story that must be imagined—the penultimate scene of discovery before the requisite happy ending. This sentimentality, mechanically reproduced in the old studios, lies at the core of the "vision" nostalgically longed for by conservatives in Bush's Washington, who resemble an audience sitting numbly in their seats after the movie has ended, hoping it will start up again, even though the overhead lights have been turned on. The Reagan "vision" is *Knute Rockne—All American*, not *Blade Runner* or *Total Recall*. The runway approach at LAX struck an unexpected nerve that was un-Reaganesque—a movie memory of sci-fi "virtual reality" and an actual remembrance of landing recently at another airport. Where had such a swiftly receding scene of sameness and pollution—a cyberpunk dystopia—been sighted before? Not just at Cinema 1-9 in the strip mall. The Valley is the East Berlin of Southern California.

CALIFORNIA POLITICS IS A LONG casting call. Pete Wilson's ascent to the governorship and Alan Cranston's retirement mean that both Senate seats will be at stake in 1992. Amid the still assembling throng of hopefuls, only one has had a prime-time show: Sonny Bono, now the Republican mayor of Palm Springs. He claims to be an outsider who can best express the voters' rage against the incumbents—"a guy from the streets . . . not the slick, articulate talker that most politicians are . . . a non-politician politician." If that's the role, he has the lines. (In 1966 Reagan ran for governor as a "citizen-politician.") Bono told the *LA Times* that his credentials include riding in Dan Quayle's car: "That was kind of a thrill and I did see it as some sort of recognition." His further credentials include being a has-been actor who was dumped by his Oscar-winning first wife. Sonny also has something that Reagan lacked: a theme song. "I've Got You, Babe" may not exactly fill in the blanks of "the vision thing," but a lot of voters know the words. In his campaign for "traditional values," Sonny might make his point by trying to put Cher in her place, just as he used to on the show. I have seen the future of American politics, and it's not even in syndication.



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWO years, Bruce Springsteen has given a concert, appearing at the Shrine with Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt in a benefit for the Christic Institute. It was the biggest political event since seemingly half of Hollywood made TV ads for the failed Big Green environmental initiative. Causes sometimes run through here like evangelical crusades in a burnt-over district. The Christic Institute is a leftover from the Iran-contra scandal period, as pertinent to the politics of the 1990s as its obsessional targets—Richard Secord, Albert Hakim, John Singlaub. The concert was intended to raise funds for a lawsuit against "the secret team"—now blamed for the crack epidemic and the S&L crisis—that had been lost and is on appeal. Jackson Browne, who used to be a bigger act than Springsteen and Raitt and with whom they have long-standing personal ties, was the moving force behind the benefit. His indistinguishable songs ranged from the earnest to the sincere. Bonnie Raitt was both gritty and vulnerable, turning the drafty auditorium into an intimate bar. And then came Springsteen, without any back-up, wearing a short-sleeve shirt. "We love you, Bruuuce!" shouted some bozo. "But you don't really know me," answered the Boss, as he tuned an acoustic guitar. He asked that the audience not applaud because it might make him lose his concentration. His only political statement was that in the 1980s we had been "sold an illusion of ourselves." The defiant bombast of "Born in the USA" was absent, but the brooding intensity was not. Some American products are still dependable, and Springsteen is one of them.

THE LIST OF PATRONS AND SPONsors of the Christic event reads like a Who's Who of Hollywood—from Woody Harrelson to Sheena Easton, from Ted Danson to Jeff Bridges. Everyone wants to do the right thing, even if it's absurd. One name, listed alphabetically with all the others, leaped off the program: Lew R. Wasserman. Over the decades he has been the most powerful man in town. He went from being Ronald Reagan's agent ("Thank heaven for Lew," writes Reagan with typical opaqueness in his autobiography. "He was a great agent and friend and I was lucky to have him in both capacities.") to creating MCA, Inc., partly built by cutting a highly beneficial syndication deal with the Screen Actors Guild president: Ronald Reagan. Wasserman is anything but a naive character; his patronage of the Christic Institute, whose only function was the propagation of a conspiratorial anti-Reaganology, is another in the flurry of ironic signs that the Reagan era has passed. A week after the concert, in a more era-defining gesture, Wasserman sold MCA to Matsushita. The Rising Sun flies over the Universal backlot.

THE SCREENING OF 'PREDATOR 2' at Fox was mostly attended by character actors, extras, and stuntmen, who happily watched themselves get butchered by an alien trophy hunter. This grisly montage was co-produced by the greatest auteur of contemporary Hollywood—Joel Silver, whose movies (*Die Hard*s 1 and 2; *Lethal Weapon*s 1 and 2) are stripped down to a few simple, visceral emotions and put on fast-forward. His grosses total about $1 billion. *Predator 2* begins with the camera descending into "Los Angeles 1997." A drug gang and the police are blasting away. (The war on drugs is still being lost, and by now, maybe, William Bennett is in the EOB as special assistant to Vice President Bono.) Enter the predator, whose hormones are stimulated by the heat of earthly violence: Lebanon, Medellín, LA. The sheer fear that the film exploits through its depiction of urban mayhem and unstated premise of social hopelessness has yet to be attained by any political campaign—not Bush's in 1988, not Helms's this year. Of course, it's just mindless entertainment. But in Hollywood, good box office is usually considered a more trustworthy guide to the market than good intentions.

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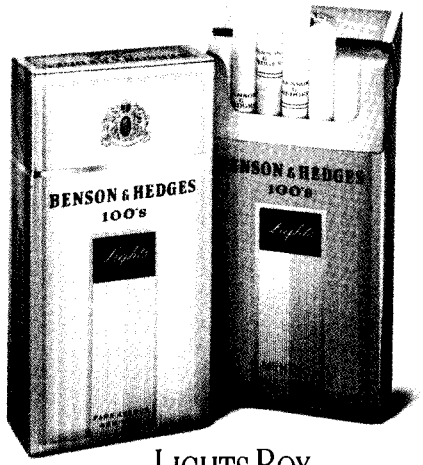

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